

**“They’re All Sort of Fake, Not Real”:
An Exploratory Study of Who Young Girls Look Up To
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of role models for younger girls. Girls aged 5 to 12 years were asked who they chose to look up to, how significant their role models were to them, why they had chosen them and if they thought they thought that they could achieve their chosen model's achievements.

Socio-cultural framework provides a useful perspective for understanding the significance of role models as they act as powerful transmitters and reinforcers of the tenets of socialization. In Social Cognitive Theory, it is claimed that children largely learn through modelling, observing and imitating significant others. Interview and task sessions including a field-mapping activity and the sorting of peer-generated photographs were conducted with 12 girls aged from 5 to 12 years from one urban school. In analysis of the interview data, it was found that family members or family substitutes were the most significant people that these girls chose and, despite the alleged pressure from popular culture, young girls in this study were able to make discerning judgements about the 'hollowness' of characters of popular culture. They identified skills or attributes that their role models demonstrated rather than physical attractiveness, their popularity or the amount of money their fame had brought them. This study is a valid representation of what mattered to a group of young girls at one specific point in time and could indicate the value of further investigation of how to maximize the benefits of role models for young girls.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

One of the most important tasks of childhood is the development of identity. As children shape their behaviour and values, they may look up to role models for guidance. This is an almost unconscious process as young children observe and learn from those around them and depend on the information the environment provides. They may identify the role models they wish to emulate based on the possession of certain skills or attributes and while children may not want to be exactly like the model they identify, they may see possibilities in that person. Parents and other family members are important role models to children at an early age but as their world widens, other institutional agencies, such as schools and cultural settings, begin to have an influence (Gray & Feldman, 2004).

I set up a qualitative study to explore who young girls look up to and why they make their choices. I explain the topics and aims of the study, my interest as a researcher in it, and how my presence as a researcher could enhance or hinder the insight that I would achieve. I describe the context of the study and how the research questions developed from this. The significance of the study and some of the constraints that I envisaged are addressed.

Topics and aims of the study

I chose to employ a qualitative study which combined individual interviews with field-mapping and peer-generated photograph sorting tasks, thus providing a rich supply of data to analyse concerning the phenomenon of whom young girls look up to and why they make their choices of such role models. The aims of this study included

exploring the role models/reference individuals that the girls nominated and the reasons why the girls identified their personal and peer-generated models. I hypothesized at the beginning of the study that I would see a change in focus with the increasing age of the girls. I was also interested as to whether the girls thought they could achieve in a similar manner to their special people.

Researcher interest and context of the study

This study was of interest to me because I have been a teacher and school leader for many years and am strongly committed to providing the optimal learning environment for the pupils. Like it or not, we are all role models and I would like to believe that I provide a strongly positive role model for both the children and young teachers but I suspect that the models provided by the home and school environment might be superseded by the wider public media personalities at an early age. The recent publication of major studies about the ‘sexualization’ of young girls, The American Psychological Association Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls (2007), and Corporate Paedophilia: Sexualisation of children in Australia (Rush & La Nauze, 2006) suggested that girls were influenced and minimized (compartmentalized) by media interpretations of their gender. These reports had caused a sensational outburst of press and television discussion.

The comprehensive study, the APA Task Force (2007) examined “the psychological theory, research, and clinical experience addressing the sexualisation of girls via the media and other cultural messages” (p.1). The report stated that:

Sexualization occurs when: a person’s value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics; a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; a person is sexually objectified – that is, made into a thing for others’ sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; and/or sexuality is inappropriately

imposed upon a person (p.1).

The Task Force found that virtually every media form studied, including television, music videos, movies, magazines and advertising provided ample evidence of sexualisation. It argued an almost soft-porn influence is being felt in the youngest age groups, teaching girls as young as 12 years to objectify themselves as sexual beings in the mistaken belief that sexualized behaviour can be a form of empowerment and self-expression. It went to say that if girls styled “their identities after sexy celebrities who populate their cultural landscape, they are, in effect, sexualizing themselves” (APA Task Force, 2007, p.2). According to the report, research evidence shows that sexualisation and objectification undermine a person’s confidence in and comfort with her own body. This leads to cognitive and emotional consequences such as shame and anxiety; mental health and physical health problems such as eating disorders, low-esteem and depression or depressed mood; and decreased sexual well-being which is an important part of healthy development. Many of the research studies investigated by the Task Force were conducted on women in late adolescence and the report indicates that younger girls may be even more strongly affected because their sense of self is still being formed.

Much debate and discussion, as a result of the publication of the report, ensued in the popular media featuring startling headlines, e.g., “The Rise of Raunch” (*Sunday Star Times*, February 25, 2007, p. C4); “This advert isn’t sexist – Yeah right” (*Sunday Star Times*, February 25, 2007, p.C1); and “The tale of a generation of ‘damaged’ girls” (*The Weekly Telegraph*, Wednesday February 28- Tuesday March 6, 2007, p.24). The articles (See Appendix B) targeted television and music videos featuring raunchy dance routines; magazines aimed at pre-teen girls mainly talking about dating, hot

guys, clothes and make-up; revealing clothes with slogans inappropriate for the age of the child; and toys. The recently-released Bratz dolls, which have been designed “for little girls who have grown up in a post-Britney era” (*The Week*, 13 January, 2007, p.13) and accompanying movies came in for much criticism for presenting an image of girls that, it was said, “robs them of their childhood experiences presenting girlhood in sexualized terms” (Dittmar, Ive & Halliwell, 2006, p.291). [These dolls are characterized by large heads, wide eyes, full lips, very small noses, a well-endowed torso and streetwise clothes]. Levin and Kilbourne (2008) in promotion of their book, “So Sexy, So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids”, claim that, when the Federal Communications Commission deregulated children’s television in 1984, marketers began to treat children as a previously untapped consumer group capturing their attention through programmes linked to toys and other products. They blame the marketers for promoting, through the media and their products, precocious sexual behaviour to pre-teen girls before they have an understanding of the deeper meanings of the behaviour. The sexual content of popular culture bombards girls with large doses of sexual content that they can not understand and presents a narrow definition of femaleness and sexuality primarily focussing on appearance. The self-value of the girls is determined on how well they feel they succeed at meeting this sexualized ideal. A forthcoming New Zealand study on the impact of popular culture on girls aged 8 to 12 by Lorie Clark (2008) was reported in the local press under the heading of “Tweenies being pushed to show cleavage” (*The Press*, May 23, 2007, p.1). According to the newspaper, Clark had found that many of her 200 research subjects had “wanted padded bras and idolised raunchy adult celebrities such as Paris Hilton and Britney Spears”. Later in the article, it noted that the research also showed that parents had a

greater influence than friends or the media and Clark suggested that parents should monitor the kind of media influences to which the children were exposed.

I questioned if similar cultural pressures were influencing the girls in my school who are 5-12 year-olds. Dress on Mufti Days in school, involving bikini tops, suggestive logos, bare midriffs and low-slung jeans, gives an indication that the marketing of 'pop princesses' in teen magazines, and popular television programmes focussing on teenage stars in "Hannah Montana" and "High School Musical", probably have an increasing influence on little girls and may lead to the mindless worship of celebrities such as Paris Hilton. Wald (1998) argued that women rock musicians play an important role in the social identity and empowerment of adolescent girls by emphasizing strength, independence and articulation and thus, encouraging them to negotiate their own interpretations of what it means to be a girl, but last year at playtimes, I noticed a group of 7 year-old girls frequently performing song and dance routines which included provocative movements that they were probably copying from popular television shows or music videos.

I wondered, given the vulnerable nature of children during their early school years, who were the people or icons that younger girls in the 5-12 age-bracket, considered as important reference individuals. I assumed that some role models could lead to self-enhancement and inspiration under some circumstances, demoralization under others, and still in other circumstances have no effect at all. I assumed that, from a Vygotskian perspective that children acquire knowledge and develop skills through interactions with others more competent than themselves (Gray & Feldman, 2004), and the people with whom the girls would identify, would widen from close family

members, to the school environment, to more public figures as age increased. As an educator in a situation where a programme is being provided for girls from 3 to 12 years-of-age, there is a desire to provide an environment and learning experiences that will enable them to grow into well-adjusted, confident adults who are able to make well-informed life choices. I reasoned that if girls receive strong positive role models in their immediate environment, then the detrimental effect of sexualisation at an early age may be ameliorated and that the girls as they increased in age would see the shallowness of the popular media marketing images.

The impetus for conducting my research grew from my concern caused by the APA Task Force Report on Sexualization of Girls (2007) and the intense and sensationalized press reaction to it. I wanted to know if 5-12 year-old girls were, in fact, marginalized by popular culture as was suggested. I hoped that people in their immediate environment would have a more positive influence on their development than the shallow models presented in the media. I set out to explore and investigate that information. I wanted to focus the interview sessions on the questions of: who the girls might look up to, how important their nominated persons were to them, why they chose them and if they felt that they could emulate what their person had achieved.

Significance of the study

This study is significant because, as reported by the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (2007), there has been little research conducted with the younger age group but, as discussed previously, much media speculation. Several theorists have struggled with the question of what determines whether and how an individual's self-views are affected by outstanding individuals but without achieving

any clear-cut conclusion (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). Previous studies have explored the effects of role models and popular culture on adolescents or young women (Gash & Conway, 1997; Geissler, 2001; Hoffner, 1996; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; Quimby & DeSantis, 2006; Tolman, Impett, Tracy & Michael, 2006) but I found one investigation into how boys learn to construct a male gender identity particularly pertinent (Walker, 2007). The researcher interviewed 111 boys aged 11-21 years and found that the boys were more discerning in their choice of whom they looked up to as significant in their lives than expected, to the exclusion of more traditional figures. I was keen to collect evidence that would provide an insight into how girls aged 5-12 would view the phenomenon.

Researcher presence, positioning and bias

It must be acknowledged that there are advantages but also limitations to conducting a qualitative piece of research in an educational establishment to which one is attached. I was reassured by Brooker (2001) that children's utterances would be more complex and more thoughtful when they were in a familiar situation with a familiar adult. The fact that I had been known to most of the girls since they entered kindergarten at the age of 3 years, and knew their backgrounds and behaviours, would make the initial rapport-establishing period easier and also should make me alert to the effects of the research situation on them. According to Brooker (2001, p. 167), it would be a situation that could produce rich and reliable evidence. I was aware that I had to make every effort to act in a reflective manner and to remain as impartial as possible. I was also conscious that I must present a non-threatening image to colleagues and parents who would be concerned about what their pupils and daughters might say. The issue of confidentiality had to be considered carefully and measures would need to be taken

to ensure that anonymity was protected for the girls and anyone whom they might identify.

Constraints of the study

I realised at the planning stages, there would be a number of constraints to conducting this piece of research both methodologically and personally. I have detailed some of the methodological challenges that had to be considered with regard to my presence as a researcher in an environment where I held a position of responsibility and power, previously in this chapter. I also acknowledged that there would be tension between conducting a piece of in-depth research of the required standard in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a degree in Master of Education while fulfilling my demanding full-time role as a school leader. This was a daunting challenge but motivation was sustained by the desire to accomplish a worthwhile insight into issues there were significant to the educational community.

Summary

I have indicated the thoughts and processes that initiated my exploratory study into who young girls look up to and the issues surrounding their decision making. I have outlined the context that guided my framing of the research questions and format. I have also highlighted my professional and personal challenges as a researcher.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE CONCERNING THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ROLE MODELLING

The significance of role models

Role models are part of everyday life and therefore are thought to have a significant impact on the beliefs and actions of individuals. They offer a framework for children to determine their values, attitudes and behaviour. In this chapter, I investigate the definitions of a role model to find one that is simple, encompasses a wide field and that is age-appropriate for the girls who were to be interviewed. I also consider the theoretical assumptions around the concept of role modelling that may have a bearing on the study. The research literature reported mainly referred to older participants but pinpoints essential elements of role modelling that would be pertinent to further investigation with a younger age group.

Definition of role model

Robert K. Merton (1963) introduced the term 'role model' in his book, "Social Theory and Social Structure". He stated that:

emulation of a peer, a parent or a public figure may be restricted to limited segments of their behaviour or values and this can be usefully described as adoption of a role model (p.303).

He went on to write that partial identification in terms of one's role might motivate a search for more extensive knowledge of the behaviours and values of that role model in other spheres. For example, partial identification with cultural heroes or public figures might, following this process, extend to full identification. This person might then become a 'reference individual'. Role models differ from reference individuals, in that the former focuses on a specific activity, while the latter is generalized to many areas of social life. Merton suggested that, at the time of writing his book, there was a

highly imperfect understanding of the determinants of selecting reference individuals and role models.

The label 'role model' is widely used in New Zealand and the concept is useful but the term is problematic. The complexity of the phenomenon probably contributes to some of the ambiguity. Since Merton's time, the term has been used extensively and loosely, so that it can encompass the whole spectrum from mentor to hero, and even to evil-doer. Pleiss and Feldhusen (1995) in their examination of role models with regard to gifted children, assumed that role models would be people considered as worthy of emulation and provide the inspiration and encouragement that helps paint the promise of a successful future. Confusion seems to arise when the term 'role model' is used interchangeably with either mentor or hero but these terms do have much in common. Pleiss and Feldhusen (1995, p.159) defined mentors as "adults who introduce students to ideas, theories, tools, activities, or careers in their own fields of expertise", whereas heroes were described as "figures who are admired from afar; there is rarely any contact between a child and his or her hero". They defined a role model as someone worthy of imitation in some area of life who falls between the status of a mentor and a hero who:

does not interact as closely or as intensely with a child as a mentor, but who, unlike a hero, may be known to or have contact with the child at some point (Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995, p159).

This definition excludes a mentor or hero from being a role model and also family members as normally, they would 'interact closely and intensely with the child' too. Maxine Singer, the President of the Carnegie Institution of Washington (1991) appeared to agree, as she wrote in an editorial entitled "Heroines and Role Models":

Role models will be for naught if there are no heroines and heroes from whom to learn about courage, about noble purpose, about how to reach within and beyond ourselves to find greatness (*Science, July 19, 1991*, p. 249).

The term 'role model' is not a clear cut one. For the purposes of my study, I needed a definition of 'role model' that was appropriate to the age group of my participants and I sought a simple definition that would encapsulate the wide variety of individuals that I suspected the girls might nominate. A definition in the "Dictionary of Sociology" (2005) described a role model as:

A significant other, upon which an individual patterns his or her behaviour in a particular social role, including adopting appropriate similar attitudes. Role-models need not be known personally to the individual: some people model their behaviour in particular roles on the real and legendary example provided by historical figures. Role-models tend to provide ideals for a particular role only, rather than a pattern to be emulated across all the constituent roles of an individual's life and self (Scott & Marshall, 2005).

Using this definition, the term, 'significant other', refers to any individual who acts as a role model on the continuum from interactive relationships with a known person to one-way attachments with little or no contact involved, but I question whether the girls would want to necessarily adopt the behaviour of any given model.

The "American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language" (2007) states a role model is "a person who serves as a model in a particular behavioural or social role for another person to emulate". This definition also seemed to cover the wide possibilities of individuals that the children could look up to and learn from via observation, interaction, imitation and/or modelling. Karunanayake and Nauta (2004, p.226) in their research with college students, used a simplified phrase "worthy of emulation" as they encapsulated the essence of the value of role models to young people. I envisaged that the girls might choose role models that they look up to and admire for

specific traits but have no desire to emulate. For example, a child might look up to their parent or teacher for their dedication to their job, but have no desire to follow a similar career path. I realized the term 'role model' appears to be multifaceted and complex with lack of agreement, but I set out to investigate, with a small group of participants, the phenomena that Merton (1963) had commented on almost half a century ago. For the purposes of my research, I chose to regard a 'role model' as a significant person who can be looked up to in some aspect of his or her life, and is deemed worthy of respect, inspiration, admiration and/or emulation by another.

Theoretical perspectives of role modelling

It is helpful to discuss the theoretical perspectives which provide the framework for how role modelling occurs. Role models are embedded into the larger social network of individuals and the concepts are not clear cut but dynamic and thoroughly intertwined.

Socio-cultural Theory

Socialization is the process by which individuals learn to become members of society by internalizing the norms and values of that society, and also by learning to perform social roles. Socio-cultural Theory provides a useful perspective for understanding the significance of role models as powerful transmitters and reinforcers of the tenets of socialization. Vygotsky focused on the importance of social interactions for learning and described it as being embedded within social events and occurring as the child interacts with people, objects and events in the environment (Vygotsky, 1978). He claimed that the younger learner would appropriate or internalize, through the signs and symbols, the culture in which they are situated (Vygotsky, 1931/1997). He believed that developmental processes take place in cultural, linguistic and

historically-formed settings such as family life and peer group interaction such as schooling.

Vygotsky developed the Zone of Proximal Development as the pivotal concept of Socio-cultural theory to explain the interdependence of social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge. A zone of proximal development may occur when an adult or proficient peer acts as a guide or mentor to guide the learner to establish new learning. The social and interpersonal activity becomes the foundation for intrapersonal functioning. This process involves internalization. Vygotsky believed that internalization does not happen through imitation but it entails an active and frequently practised creative reasoning process of a reciprocal nature. After many experiences of supported expression, the child gradually masters an action that is qualified with cultural meaning and in doing so, has passed through the zone of proximal development. For example, Vygotsky (1978, p.56) describes a child pointing a finger. Initially, this is a meaningless action however, as people react to the gesture, it becomes a movement that has meaning. The pointing gesture becomes an interpersonal connection between individuals. Galina Zuckerman (2007), in a commentary on the zone of proximal development, described it as “a social relation between two people” (p.48) that allows “for the possibility of a meeting” (p.50) for the establishment of understanding, harmonization or transformation. Following Vygotskian thinking that learning collaboratively precedes and shapes development, I questioned whether popular culture personalities, where there is no personal contact and “experiences of co-participation” (Zuckerman, 2007, p.49) involved nor any learner feedback, could hold a sustained and meaningful role for young children.

Social Cognitive Theory

Vygotsky's work led on to my consideration of Bandura's extensive writings on social learning. Social Cognitive Theory is an approach to social learning focusing on people's thoughts and how they affect social behaviour. It is claimed that children largely learn through modelling, observing and imitating adults who demonstrate appropriate or inappropriate behaviour (Bandura, 1977). Bandura found that learning could occur through observation without direct reinforcement of the observer but the child had to see the model receive reinforcement or perceive that they did. Such learning is subsequently mediated through factors such as model and observer characteristics and features of the modelled behaviour.

According to Bandura, in the course of development, the regulation of behaviour moves from interpersonal to intrapersonal, where the child begins to use self-sanctions and self-directions in evaluating self (Bandura, 1989; Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Pastorelli, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Rola, Rozsa & Bandura, 2001). Self-efficacy is the ability to achieve desired results. Perceived self-efficacy includes beliefs about one's ability or competence to bring about those intended results. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goals that learners set for themselves and the stronger their commitment to them and their motivation will be (Bandura, 1989; Bandura & Jourden, 1991). People of high efficacy set challenging goals for themselves and regulate the necessary effort to reach their goals and overcome challenges. Children with a high sense of efficacy visualize successful scenarios that provide positive guides for performance, whereas, those that see themselves as inefficacious, are likely to visualize situations where things go wrong and therefore, their confidence to perform is undermined (Bandura, 1989; 2001). Irrespective of how

inspirational the role model might be, unless “people believe they can produce desired outcomes for their actions, they have little incentive to act or persevere in the face of difficulties” (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001, p.187).

In a longitudinal study of the network of sociocognitive influences on the career aspirations of 272 teenagers aged 11-15 years, carried out by Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara and Pastorelli, 2001, it was found that the children’s perceived efficacy rather than their academic achievement was the key determinant of their perceived occupational self-efficacy and preferred choice of careers. The findings showed that self-efficacy beliefs limited the career options given serious consideration by the children. This was found to be most significant for the girls who were “beset with self-doubt” (Bandura et al., 2001, p.202). Bandura and his associates pointed to the contribution that negative stereotypic cultural modelling of gender role from the home, school, peer system, mass media and the workplace place plays in diminishing the personal efficacy of girls. On the other hand, the provision of female role models to inspire and encourage women to enter a wide variety of career paths with guided mastery experiences would build resilient self-efficacy, thus removing the stereotypical barriers that constrict the range of career options open to women. I hoped that my interviews would provide some data relevant to the self-efficacy of my particular group of girls.

The social comparison process holds that humans have a drive to assess how they are doing and in order to quantify that, they seek standards against which to compare themselves (Pelham & Wachmuth, 1995). It is the process whereby people reduce this uncertainty about their beliefs, abilities and emotions by comparing themselves to

others. It refers to the process of thinking about information about other people in relation to the self, either passively by acquiring social information automatically and subconsciously, or actively, by selecting an individual with whom to compare one's self. Blowers, Loxton, Grady-Flessner, Occhipinti and Dawe (2003) investigated the relationships among sociocultural pressures to be thin, internalization of the thin ideal, social comparison, body mass index, and body dissatisfaction in young girls. The researchers found that perceived pressure to be thin from the media was associated with body dissatisfaction via internalization of the thin ideal. The relationship between internalization of the thin ideal and body dissatisfaction was partially influenced by social comparison. When a discrepancy occurs between the two performances, the individual may attempt to alter his or her behaviour to match the targeted model. This process is known as assimilation and it leads to higher achievement. If the model chosen is inappropriate and the individual is demoralized by the unachievable goal the discrepancy provides contrast which may lead on to depression and dissatisfaction.

Although not every social encounter with social information leads to social comparison, people receive a barrage of comparison information in everyday life that leads them to automatically compare themselves. Stapel and associates (2000; 2004) held the view that social comparison effects can occur spontaneously and unconsciously on exposure to relevant comparison targets leading to spontaneous changes in self-evaluations which are not only quick and strong but also complex and dynamic (Stapel & Blanton, 2004; Stapel & Suls, 2000). Unfortunately, when encounters are brief and on a superficial level as in their research with 124 female psychology students, Stapel and Suls (2000) reported contrast to be the more likely

outcome rather than assimilation. The process of social comparison is highly relevant when considering the impact of role models. I suspected that if girls were comparing themselves negatively to their chosen role models, assimilation was not going to take place.

There is evidence that significant changes occur in the nature of social comparison from the age when a child first starts school, when simple feedback of success or failure is influential, to around the age of 7 years when the process of social comparison becomes more complex. At this later stage, social comparisons gain a greater importance and involve the child's self-concept in response to the powerful transmitters and reinforcers of socio-cultural ideals (Dittmar, Halliwell & Ive, 2006; Ruble, Boggiano, Feldman & Loebl, 1980). Dittmar, Halliwell and Ive (2006) used sociocultural theory as a useful perspective for investigating the influence of 'Barbie' dolls on girls' developing body image. Sociocultural icons are important because they can act as aspirational role models for young children. In an earlier study, (Kuther & McDonald, 2004) it was reported that all girls claimed intensive identification with Barbie but by the age of 10 years underwent a distancing process. Dittmar et al., (2006) hypothesized that negative Barbie exposure effect would occur for younger girls up to the age of 7 years but might no longer be evident after that age and the overall effect would be moderated by the underlying developmental processes. They exposed a sample of 162 girls 5-8 years-of-age to different images of Barbie dolls, Emme dolls or neutral (control) images and also gave them a simple questionnaire about body esteem. They found that body dissatisfaction was significantly higher after the girls had been exposed to the Barbie doll images in comparison to the other images. There was also an age-related difference in the girls' responses, with the

detrimental effect being felt by the 5 ½ - 7 ½ age-group but not by the 7 ½ to 8 ½ year-group. Dittmar et al. (2006, p.290) argued that developmentally, the influence of Barbie as a sociocultural embodiment of the thin beauty ideal on very young girls' self-concept and self-evaluation, appeared direct and not mediated by internalized cognitive self-concept structures. In the older group of girls, response to sociocultural stimuli became more reflexive because of the greater involvement of self-concept. Their desire to be thinner was more a reflection of that internalized standard rather than a direct response to environmental stimuli. I wondered if I would gain any data that would indicate developmental changes that would be consistent with these findings.

Social comparison and social categorization operate together. Social categorization is a key step in the socialization process. Here individuals classify occupants of the social world into categories or groups on the basis of certain sociological criteria such as race, ethnicity, sex, gender, class, religion, language, occupation, peer association and nationality (Grieve & Hogg, 1999). These categories help individuals define and interpret their position in the social world. Understanding that an individual may belong to more than one social category, it is equally likely that he/she may be excluded from groups too. Each social category signifies a social identity, which in turn has defining characteristics and attitudes indicating appropriate behaviour of the group. Not only does social categorization describe and prescribe, it also evaluates social categories. Hogg and Sunderland (1991) pointed out that social categories or groups do not and cannot exist in isolation. They are compared and contrasted with one another, and are continually evaluated against each another. This evaluative process allows children to understand that people can be the same or different. The

evaluation process is not limited to the group but also incorporates the self. This self-evaluation effectively creates a magnification of the perceived similarities with social groups and perceived differences between social groups (Hogg & Sunderland, 1991). It is the process which changes individuals into groups. In short, social categorization and social comparison co-exist and operate together to produce group behaviour.

Social mobility refers to the idea that there are frontiers between groups and people are able to transfer or pass through the groups, either by choice or hard work. Social mobility refers to the movement, either downwards, upwards or laterally, of people or groups from one social class to another (Charlton & Bettencourt, 2001; Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish & Hodge, 1996). It has been argued that there is a crucial relationship between the efforts in pursuing a good education and upward social mobility. If, according to Pleiss and Feldhusen (1995), role models are worthy of emulation because they hold the promise of a brighter future, the idea of social mobility may be involved.

Gender development has also been considered by Social Cognitive theorists. Bussey and Bandura (1999) claimed that observational learning is a key mechanism in gender development and gender conceptions and role behaviour are the result of a broad network of social influences and a life-course perspective. A great deal of gender-linked information is exemplified by models in the child's immediate environment. In fact, it was stressed that modelling serves as a major conveyor of sex role information (Bussey & Bandura, 1984). Parents play an active role in modelling gender specific behaviour and this is reinforced by peer-group associations and significant persons in social, educational and occupational contexts. People learn almost subconsciously

from watching individuals, but significant others are likely to be of profound importance in people's lives (Bandura, 1977). Children admire and therefore tend to select competent powerful models to imitate. They are particularly willing to follow and copy the behaviour of older peers and adults. In addition, the mass media provides persuasive modelling of gendered roles and conduct. Bussey and Bandura (1999, p.685) believed that the learning of gender concepts occurs more quickly and at an earlier age through modelling.

The contribution of Bandura's Social-cognitive theory builds on to the earlier social learning approaches by addressing the fact that human development involves a complex interplay of many factors. Social-cognitive theory highlights the active role of children in their observational learning. They can attend selectively to particular people in the environment, then mentally organize, combine and rehearse the observed behaviours, decide when to enact the behaviour and finally monitor the outcomes. Role models are considered key players in this socialization process. However, socialization is an active process, influenced by the unique characteristics of the individual and their unique social context so outcomes are in no way predetermined (Bricheno & Thornton, 2007).

Developmental changes facing young children relative to social learning

Children are active seekers of knowledge. They do not function as solitary agents but in a rich social and cultural context with social contact and collaboration (Wood, 1998). Preschoolers share activities with more mature members of society who encourage them to master culturally important tasks. They gradually become more proficient at manipulating and controlling the appropriate cultural symbol systems.

Between 3-5 years-of-age, they continue to widen their zones of proximal development as they strive for inter-subjectivity in dialogues with peers. They affirm their partner's message as they share viewpoints and play-act, adding new ideas. They form an understanding of social norms and expectations and strive to follow them. At school age, children internalize the expectations of others to form an ideal self. They look to other people for information about themselves and frequently make reference to social groups in their self descriptions. The first critical period for the social instinct in well-defined form is between 7 to 8 years (Wood, 1998). If the act of social comparison has a positive outcome, it may encourage the learner to achieve goals, but a large discrepancy between real and ideal self greatly affects self esteem leading to feelings of sadness, hopelessness and depression. By middle childhood, the child organizes their observations of typical behaviour and internal states into general dispositions that they are able to verbalize to others. They describe themselves in terms of competencies. They judge their appearance, abilities and behaviour in relation to others. Social comparisons begin as they compare their own performance to that of one peer and use that information in terms of self evaluation. As they get older, they can compare multiple individuals and by the adolescent stage, they are able to compare and contrast their different selves in different relationships. The influence of the peer group increases in importance and self concept becomes increasingly vested in feedback from close friends rather than parents. The changing content of self is a product of both cognitive capacities and the feedback from others during social interaction.

The role models who influence children tend to change over time. During the early years, young children refer to their immediate family members to provide positive

attitudes and behaviours. Up to the age of 5, parental influence may have the greatest impact and the young child relies on the feedback of parents in assessing competency (Brustad, 1996). At school, the child is exposed to a greater range of people but approximately up to the age of 13, parental role models remain significant (White & O'Brien, 1999). This was supported by Anderson and Cavallaro (2002) who surveyed 179 children aged 8 to 13 about whom they wanted to be like, including people they knew and famous people or imaginary characters. 34% of the pupils identified their parents as role models, and only 20% named entertainers and 14% friends. More respondents named a person they knew (65%) rather than a person they did not know, such as a character in the media (35%). Some children employed a degree of scepticism when judging the worthiness of a role model.

Gash and Conway (1997) presented the opposite point of view in their investigation into the characteristics of contemporary heroes and heroines. They claimed that heroic figures presented in the media have replaced parents, siblings, and friends. Their sample included 700 third and fourth grade children from USA and Ireland. It was interesting that the American children cited personal social qualities as their reason for nominating their heroes whereas the Irish children named fame and fortune which are more characteristics of idols rather than heroes. The qualities named by the girls were "beautiful, caring, gentle, honest, kind and loving" (Gash & Conway, 1997, p.365). These traits could be regarded as typical gender stereotypes (Williams & Best, 1990). On the other hand, girls were more likely than the boys to choose heroes of either gender. The USA girls were found more likely to name proximal figures. As Pleiss and Feldhusen (1995, p.159) defined heroes as "figures who are admired from

afar; there is rarely any contact between a child and his or her hero", it was not surprising that figures in the child's immediate environment were not named.

The nature of role model relationships

Role models can be found in any aspect of a child's life for example the home, school, community and media. They also may be historical figures or fictional characters in literature (Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995). There may or may not be direct interaction between the person and his/her role model. Pleiss and Feldhusen (1995) explained the relationship between children and their mentors, role models and heroes as a continuum varying from intense and personal, involving a great deal of interaction, to one in which there may be only indirect but nevertheless empathetic experiences rather than face-to-face interactions. Each end of the continuum may generate equally as intense responses on the part of the child depending on significance and relevance to the child (Lockwood & Kunda, 1999).

Identification of a role model is not the same as interaction. The two processes involve different elements. The response a child might make to a role model may be influential in an educational, occupational or personal field. Bell (1970) in a longitudinal study of 142 American males from their ninth grade in school until 7 years after school completion, gave the example of a father who might serve as a most important assimilation role model for his son in the personal sphere and yet his son may not wish to imitate him occupationally.

A child may not want to fully emulate the person that they consider as a role model, but there is something about that individual that they admire. They may identify the

model based on respect for or possession of certain skills or attributes. Bricheno and Thornton (2007) explored whether or not children actually see their teachers as role models. The study asked adolescents in four schools in England who their role models were and what they regarded as important attributes for a role model. The authors used a definition of 'role model' as "a person you respect, follow, look up to or want to be like" (p.383). Positive personality traits, such as honesty, helpfulness and hard working were the most frequently attributed by the children to their role models.

The previously mentioned findings were consistent with a second English study investigating the importance of the gender of teachers to 7 to 8 year-olds (Carrington, Francis, Hutchings, Skelton, Read & Hall, 2007). The findings revealed that the gender of teachers had little apparent effect on the academic motivation and achievement of either boys or girls. For the majority of the children, the gender of the teacher was largely immaterial. They valued teachers, whether men or women, who were consistent and even handed and supportive of them as learners. In a similar study with children aged 8-13 on whom children actually chose as role models and why, Anderson and Cavallaro (2002) found that the attributes that children chose varied depending on whom they chose. For example, parents were named because they were "kind and understanding", while media characters were named because of their skills.

Self-regulatory significance

Positive role model behaviour may include demonstrating competence in skills, maintaining a sense of humour, staying calm or flexible, exhibiting confidence, promoting a positive behaviour, showing a caring attitude or showing respect for others. Lockwood, Jordan and Kunda (2002) claimed, in their study of motivation by

positive or negative role models with 103 university students, that “positive role models, individuals who have achieved outstanding success, are widely expected to inspire others to pursue similar excellence” (p. 854). It is important, however, to note that role modelling should not be assumed to be solely positive in nature. A person could be chosen as a role model for their deviant behaviour and there were circumstances when negative role models could be motivating. Lockwood and colleagues (2002) found that positive role models representing a desired self inspire others by encouraging the pursuit of success, a promotional strategy, whereas negative role models representing a feared self, could act as an inspirational force when the person is intent on avoiding failure. This latter example then works as a prevention strategy. Positive role models boost motivation by illustrating key strategies for achieving success, while negative role models may boost success by illustrating key strategies for avoiding failure. The inspirational impact of positive and negative role models is therefore dependent on the individual’s current concerns and the goals that they are striving to achieve when they encounter these models.

Attainability

The role model will provide a stronger inspirational model when their achievements seem attainable. If a highly superior role model holds an unrealistic level of achievement, the individual may feel discouraged by their own relative inferiority and the effect may be undermining. In their research with 69 university students, “Superstars and Me: Predicting the impact of role models on self”, Lockwood and Kunda (1997) found that to be inspired by a ‘star’ [A ‘star’ was considered as an individual of “outstanding achievement” (p.91).], one had to view the star’s success as attainable. When this condition is not met, the superior other is expected to have a

negative rather than positive impact on self. However, if one can see the possibility of achieving a similar success in the future, the role model can still inspire and motivate.

Domain relevance

It was also important that the role model's domain of excellence was in a relevant field to the student (Lockwood & Kunda, 1999). In a series of studies, Lockwood and Kunda matched university students to a high-achieving role model in the same field to which the students were hoping to aspire. After reading articles about their models, they were interviewed and completed ratings. Of the participants, 45% indicated that the target had inspired them, compared to 15% of the participants who had been exposed to potential role models in irrelevant fields. Domain self-relevance may determine whether one engages or not with the model. The role model then provides inspiration and motivation.

Similarity of gender, race or age

It is likely that individuals will seek role models who are similar to them in some easily identifiable way such as gender or race. Several researchers have demonstrated that identification with role models of the same gender and ethnicity is an important variable when predicting career aspirations of university students (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004; Quimby & DeSantis, 2006; Wohlford, Lochman & Barry, 2004). The studies investigated whether college students' race and/or gender were related to the race and/or gender of their identified career role models and found that, consistent with Bandura's (1977, 1986) social learning theory, students tended to have role models whose race and gender were the same as their own. However, "role models who are different from oneself may help to challenge and dispel myths and stereo-

types and may promote a greater appreciation of diversity” (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004, p. 231). Women were more likely than men to choose other-sex role models. It was speculated that similar role model choices may not have been available or that character traits and achievements may be more significant than gender. The boost of aspirations is a key function of role models. The effectiveness of models to influence learners to effectively carry out a specific behaviour may be dependent on the characteristics of the models concerned (Bandura, 1997). If a model is similar rather than dissimilar to the learner, there is more likelihood of the latter being motivated. I wondered if the research data I would collect, would demonstrate this point.

Personally-known role models

Parents and other family members are most likely to have close contact with the young child and provide a natural, close mentoring relationship. Through shared activities involving modelling of behaviour, learning opportunities and personal stories of success or failure, family members may provide a significant role model. Bryant and Zimmerman (2003), when researching the impact of role models on the psychological outcomes of 679 African American 14-17 year-olds from four urban schools, asked the adolescents to identify who they ‘looked up to’ and found that “looking up to, respecting, and viewing a family member as a role model” might provide a brighter window for future development (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003, p. 59). The researchers found that role models who were proximal and who saw the adolescents frequently could promote psychological well-being.

Although role models are most likely to be parents, Ainsworth (1989) suggested that children may adopt parent surrogates, such as older siblings or grandparents,

especially when they have been unable to form these bonds with their own parents. Like parents, siblings provide an emotion bond, advice, assistance and model behaviour that the child may be inclined to imitate. However, reporting siblings as role models rather than parents may be a sign of discord in the parent-child bond (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003). Extended family members can also act as parent surrogates and may also be an indication the child lacks a role model within their immediate environment. However, the researchers did neglect to make the important point that not all parents make suitably positive role models for their young people. Bryant and Zimmerman (2003) found that next to parents, early adolescents turned to their grandparents most often for affection. Fewer than 10% of the participants identified primary role models who were not in their immediate or extended family. Although this research had investigated older children than the participants I intended to interview, and delved into psychological outcomes which I did not intend to investigate, the findings were relevant to my planned study and I wondered if there would be any similar themes.

Summary

For the purposes of my research, I have chosen to define a 'role model' as a significant person who, in some aspect of their life, is deemed worthy of respect, inspiration, admiration and/or emulation by another. I have acknowledged and outlined briefly some of the contributions of Vygotsky and Bandura, which provide considerable clarification of the processes of observational learning through modelling. I considered these would be key mechanisms relevant to my study. I realize that children exist in a complex world and that identification of any one theory would not necessarily cover or explain the child's unique situations or their individual

developmental pathways. I hoped my investigation would find data to inform my understanding of the intertwined complexity of role modelling.

I have explored some of literature relevant to the relationship between my participants and the role models they might nominate. I noted that role models are most likely to have a positive effect when they are considered relevant to the person's own needs; their impact will be to enhance and inspire if the individual believes that future success is attainable, but will demoralize and deflate if the discrepancy seems too great; the significance of the role model will be enhanced if the domain of interest matches that of the observer; and lastly, the role model may provide a greater positive inspirational and motivational role if similarity can be found between the role model and the observer in the areas of gender, age or race.

Research questions

The impetus for conducting my research grew from my concern caused by the APA Task Force Report on Sexualization of Girls (2007) and the intense and sensationalized press reaction to the report. My experiences as a teacher led me to believe that girls are more discerning and resilient than the popular press claimed. I planned my research bearing in mind the questions I wanted to pose, the readings relevant to the phenomenon, and my knowledge of the girls I wished to interview. I set out to investigate:

1. Who are the role models for young girls?
2. Do young girls look up to people they know or famous people?
3. How highly do they rate their nominated role models?
4. What qualities about their role models do the girls respect, admire, wish to

emulate or find inspiring?

5. Do the girls think their role model's achievements are attainable?

I hoped the data collected would contribute to gaining clarity on who were the people younger girls chose as role models and why they looked up to them. I hoped the information would be a useful perspective for other researchers and educators who wish to support young girls as they grow into confident young women.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

To explore the significance of role models to young girls, I chose to employ a qualitative methodology which would emphasize the importance of listening to the child's view of phenomena that has a direct impact on them. I found the guidelines presented by Brooker (2001), Dockett & Perry (2007) and van Manen (1990) reassuring, that as a teacher and administrator working within the context of the study and being well-known to the girls, the relationship would enhance my trustworthiness to conduct research, construct meaning and interpret the data.

Childhood is viewed as a distinct and important phase in human development valued for its unique qualities rather than its similarity to adulthood. Children, therefore, have a perspective of their own to offer which may differ from the opinions of their close significant adults. It is both ethical and logical to ask children about their beliefs.

Methodologies and approaches, however, must be relevant and meaningful. I chose to utilize a standardized open-ended interview, a structured approach that was highly focussed but would minimize my influence as an interviewer (Coll, 2002), a field map task adapted from Samuelsson, Thernlund and Ringström (1996), and Sturges, Dunn, and Davies (2001), that would give me data with regard to the importance each girl allotted to each of their chosen role models and would also improve the internal validity of the data; and a photograph-sorting task that would provide information on the views of the girls about public personalities.

Selection of participants

The girls chosen for this study attended an urban school where they are educated co-educationally up to the age of 8 years when they move to a single-sex setting until Year 8. In the co-educational part of the school, the percentage of girls on roll is 42%.

80% of the pupils are of New Zealand European/Pakeha ethnic background; 1% Māori; 7% Asian; 7% British and Irish and 3% American.

149 information letters and consent forms were sent to all the parents of the girls between 5 to 12 years-of-age (Appendix A). The consent forms and their return envelopes were colour coded so they could be easily sorted on return: 5-6 year-olds: pink; 7-8 year-olds: blue; 9-10 year-olds: yellow and 11-12 year-olds: white. The 51 envelopes containing the consent forms were returned to four colour-coded boxes in the front hallway. At the end of the 3 day return period, the principal was asked to draw out three consent forms from each box. A reserve was pulled out from each box to be used if a child happened to be absent on the interview days.

Participants

A total of 12 girls, were randomly selected from the four age-groups by the method as described above. Six came from the co-educational part of the school and six from the single-sex department. The participants were: two 5 year-olds; one 6 year-old; three 7 year-olds; one 9 year-old; two 10 year-olds; one 11 year-old and two 12 year-olds from nine different classrooms. The teachers of the girls ranged evenly from younger (20-30 age-group) to older (50-plus age-group). All had female class teachers but met male members of staff during the school day. A maximum of two children came from any one class, minimizing the amount of pre-interview discussion that could occur. 10 of the girls were well-known to me. I had not met two of the older girls previously. One of the girls had a strong and supportive Māori family background, the rest were of European or New Zealand Pakeha extraction. The girls came from both single and

two-parent families with parents mainly in the early 40s age group with business or professional occupations.

Timeframe for study

A timetable covering a period of 2 days was drawn up to suit the participants, the teachers and myself. The girls were randomly assigned to a 40 minute time slot. The interviews and tasks were carried out over a 2 day period to minimize the amount of discussion that could occur between participants.

Research setting

The interviews and tasks were conducted in my office, a quiet room well known to the girls on the school campus. Telephone, computer and visitor interruptions were avoided.

Research design

Permission from the Human Ethics Committee, school, parents and participants

The submission for the Human Ethics Committee was prepared with the assistance of my supervisors and approval was granted (Appendix A). Permission was sought from and granted by the school to conduct the study within the school community (Appendix A). All potential research participants and their parents were provided with information about the study and had the right to give or deny consent in writing (Appendix A). The girls were also asked verbally if they were willing to take part at the beginning of the interview and were informed that they could withdraw at any stage. Again at the end, they were asked permission for their data to be used.

Confidentiality

Participants were assured of their rights to privacy both in written and oral form. Each girl was given a randomly allotted letter which was used to identify field notes, tapes and digital recording of field maps. People identified by the girls were identified by pseudonyms so that confidentiality of third persons could be maintained. Letters were used in the writing up of transcripts. At the end of the process all names were changed to pseudonyms to avoid any breach of confidentiality.

Ownership of research artefacts

The girls had the opportunity to ask questions or check the data at anytime during the interviews, and they were given copies of their field map photographs to keep after the interview process was completed. Permission was asked for me to use the field notes, tapes and photographs as they were artefacts produced by the children participating in the research.

Interview and task sessions

The children were interviewed individually for approximately 40 minutes. At the beginning of the session the children were offered the right to opt out if they so chose, before, or during the session. It was stressed that there were no right or wrong answers but that it was their opinion that was sought. It was explained that the session would be audio-taped so that the notes could be verified for accuracy thereby increasing reliability. The children could have the notes reread to them at any time if they wished. They were assured that their names would not be used and confidentiality would be maintained. A code letter was given randomly to each participant so that

confidentiality was ensured on notes and data. The interview and task session consisted of three components: an interview – 15 minutes, a field-mapping task – 10 minutes and a photograph-sorting task – 15 minutes. It was planned so that each child felt able to express herself freely with a minimum of stress and disruption. It included developmentally appropriate props and stimuli to engage the children's interest.

Standardized open-ended interview

The advantage of using an interview rather than a questionnaire is that the participants' perspectives are provided using language natural to them (Burns, 1997). This limits the effect of the researchers' preconceptions, biases and beliefs in directing the line of interviewing. All children received the same interview questions and instructions and in the same order essentially trying to use the same wording each time. The direct adult-controlled questions were kept to a minimum and were kept simple, neutral, bland and unembroidered to minimize suggestibility and increase reliability. The questions contained no information or only information provided by the child. Suggestive interviewing techniques can compromise the accuracy of a child's reporting (Bruck, Ceci, & Hembrooke, 1998; Gilstrap, 2004). A strong attempt was made to make sure the questions did not lead the participants towards specific or predetermined conclusions but, rather, led them to clarify and elaborate. The need to minimize interviewer influence was important to me but I found the precise wording difficult to maintain and it also seemed to promote an air of formality that was detrimental to putting the girls at their ease. Better quality data is received when the interviewer is more responsive and flexible (Dockett & Perry, 2007). The need to achieve a relaxing atmosphere encouraged me to be more flexible but I strove to be

non-judgemental and non-committal so that validity and reliability were not compromised.

Being an attentive listener, attending to the participant, displaying empathy and acceptance, conveying respect and creating an ethos of trust were important to me as I hoped it would lead to a willingness to convey real feelings, thoughts and emotions. Sometimes I used strategies of summarizing, clarifying and checking out inconsistencies. I recorded comments about my performance and gut feelings as a personal log after the close of each interview. This helped me to evaluate validity and reliability later.

Questions (Appendix A)

The questions were all about who the girls might look up to. They were designed to find information about persons they might look up to in their family, school, in the popular media, in books and in any other field they might nominate. The second question in each group asked what abilities the participant admired about the person named. They were then asked if they thought they could achieve a similar success.

1. a. Is there anyone in your family that you look up to?
b. What is it about that person that you look up to?
c. (Further follow-up question) Do you think you could do/be/achieve what they do?
2. a. Is there anyone you look up to in school?
b. What is it about that person that you look up to?
c. (Further follow-up question) Do you think it is possible that you could do/be/achieve that?

3.
 - a. Is there anyone from television/movies/videos/games/magazines that you look up to?
 - b. Do you watch/read them frequently? (Every day, weekly or monthly)
 - c. What is it about that person that you look up to?
 - d. (Further follow-up question) Do you think it is possible that you could do/be/achieve that?
4.
 - a. What about a book character? Is there a favourite book character that you look up to?
 - b. What is it about that person that you look up to?
 - c. (Further follow-up question) Do you think it is possible that you could do/be/achieve that?
5.
 - a. Is there anyone else that you feel you look up to in a different area that we have missed out?
 - b. What is it about that person that you look up to?
 - c. (Further follow-up question) Do you think that you could do/be/achieve the things they can do?

Data recording and analysis

The children's responses were recorded on the form for note taking (Appendix A) and were also audio-taped for subsequent verification of the notes. Audiotapes of the interviews were transcribed and checked to ensure their completeness and accuracy.

I found the work of Graneheim and Lundman, (2004), O'Donoghue and Punch, (2003) and Tolich and Davidson (1999) valuable in understanding the steps to follow in conducting my qualitative content analysis.

Step 1: The 'unit of analysis' was regarded as each interview session. Each interview had been taped thus minimizing the loss of data. The tapes were then transcribed verbatim and the transcript was checked against the tape several times to verify accuracy. To begin to obtain a sense of the whole from the unit of analysis, notes were made during the transcribing process from the audio-tapes and each interview was listened to and read three or four times before further analysis commenced. I noted any thoughts or questions that the texts posed for me.

Step 2: The analysis of the transcribed interviews began by breaking the transcripts of each child into meaningful units. A 'meaning unit' is "words, sentences or paragraphs containing aspects related to each other through their content and context"

(O'Donoghue & Punch, (2003, p.106). Each transcript was considered and written up according to the 'meaning units' from which role models were nominated: the family setting; the school; from the popular media; the world of books; from any other significant area and a set of peer-generated role models. In each section, it was noted, using the direct quotes from the transcript: who the children nominated; how important each role model was to the child; why they looked up to that person; and if the child thought they could achieve what their nominated person had achieved. This stage involved the process of 'condensation', "a process of shortening while still preserving the 'core', and 'abstraction', a process of abstracting and grouping together under higher logical headings" (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003, p.106). Irrelevant meaning units were discarded.

Step 3: At this point, I examined the data revealed in Step 2 to see if themes could be seen that were relevant to each unit of analysis. Using the themes, the information was drawn together as a narrative to illustrate my assumptions of each girl's responses

with the intent of understanding expressed and implied meanings. The process of writing this commentary on each interview involved moving back and forth from the data to meanings.

Field-mapping task

In addition to the interview questions, I designed a field-mapping task that all participants completed (as can be seen in Figure.1. p.41). The purpose of the field-mapping task was to order the relative importance of significant role models for each girl across the domains of family, school, popular media, the world of books and any other area nominated by the child.

A social network instrument for younger children should be easy to understand, not too time-consuming, but yet produce constructive data. The field-mapping technique is employed as a child-friendly system with easily understood instructions to give the child's view of the relative importance of a social network. The map uses physical distance to symbolize emotional closeness and shows the network from a purely individual viewpoint. The method shows good short-term stability and validity in comparison with self-report instruments (Samuelsson, Thernlund & Ringstron, 1996; Sturges, Dunn, & Davies 2001).

Materials

The base mat was a square piece of white material, (1 ½ metres) with three concentric circles radiating from the centre (self), indicating the strength of the perceived significance. The inner circle was to show an extremely important relationship, 'look up to totally'; the second – very important, 'look up to a lot', and the third –

important, 'look up to'. The circles were divided into half vertically so that the right-hand side was to be used to map the persons of personal significance to the individual. The left-hand side was for peer-generated role models that would be used later at the photograph-sorting task stage.

The symbolic figures were different coloured laminated shapes (Family – red; School – blue; Popular media - green; Book characters - yellow; Any other significant role model - orange). Adult females were symbolized by solid coloured figures (6cms in height) with a triangular base; adult males – solid coloured figures with a square base; peer-aged females – smaller shaded triangular figure (4cms in height); peer-aged males – smaller shaded square figure. The figures were attached to the base map by the children when they undertook the field-mapping task. Blutak was used for this purpose.

Process

Using the people the children identified in their interview, the following sequence was followed using cued invitations to find out more information:

- On the map, you are at the centre of the circles.
- This is the person you look up to in your family. This is Place your person to show how important they are to you. The first circle means “extremely important”, the second one – “very important”, the outer one is “important”.
- Repeat process for the other areas of interest: School; Popular Media; Book character and Any other significant area.

My “Who I look up to” Map

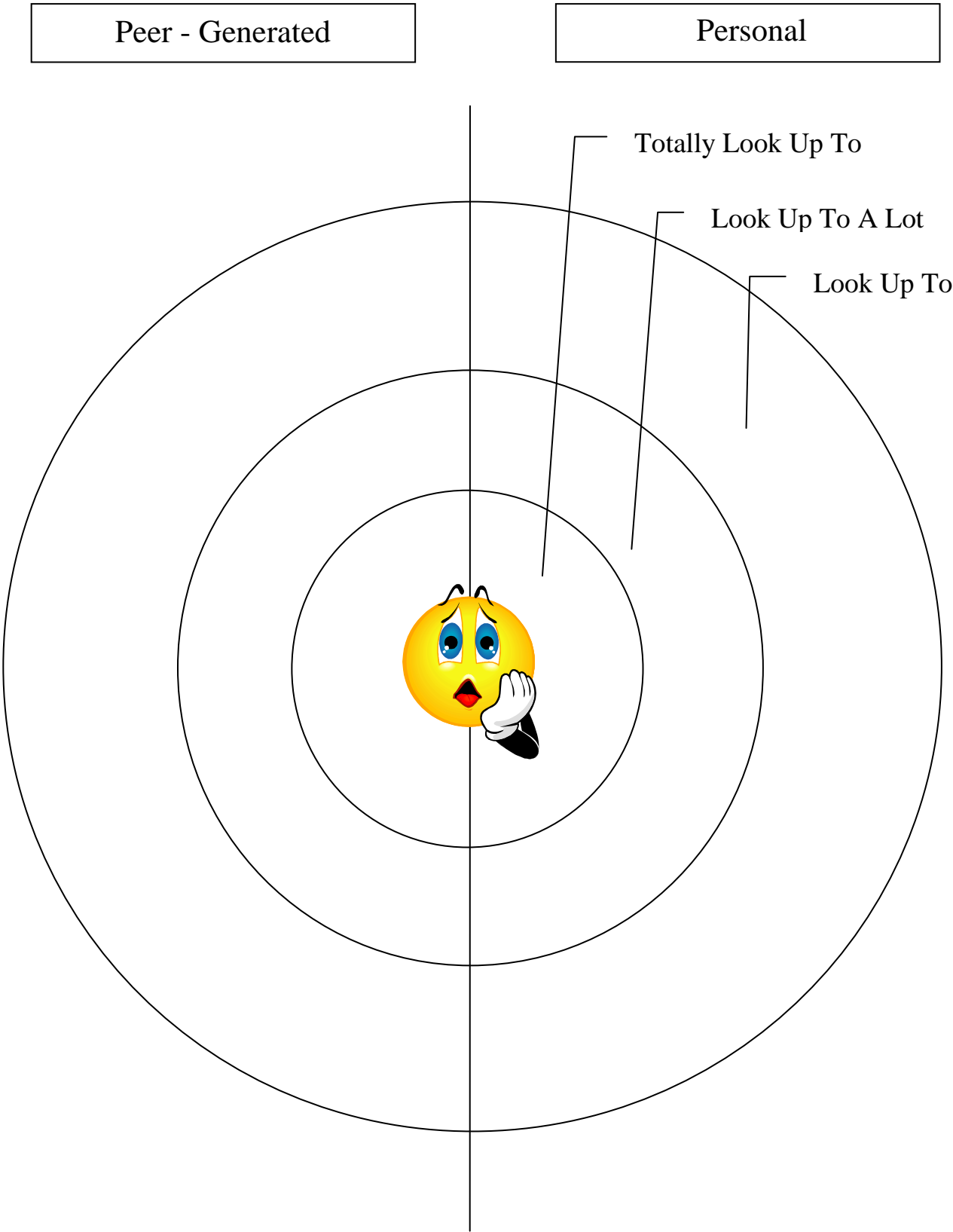
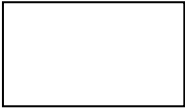


Figure 1. The field-mapping task



Recording

The placement of the significant figures by each child was recorded by a digital photograph, having first asked the child's permission. The identifying code letter was placed on the bottom right-hand corner of each child's completed map.

Photograph-sorting task*Purpose*

I chose the photograph-sorting task to provide information with regard to which current popular media personalities the girls recognized, and if they regarded any of them as worth 'looking up to'. A similar process as previously undertaken of placing them on the field map was planned so that a comparison could be seen between the girl's personally identified people and the people that they had nominated from the selection of peer-generated icons. I hoped the completed task would give me a picture of how the girls rated people in their personal sphere in comparison to current public personalities.

The sorting paradigm has the advantage of offering an interesting method using visual stimuli with the minimal need for instructions to generate a discussion about the attributes of the portrayed individuals. Presentation of pictorial cues has the added advantage of standardizing the criteria used to make comparisons, and also eliminates the potential differences of verbal ability (Howard, 2002; Ladd & Emerson, 1984). I used the activity to gain more information about the people the girls might look up to.

The photographs used in the task were prepared by a class of Year 8 girls as a special project at another school to avoid the personalities being previously discussed by the

participants. The preparation of the photographs was organized by a teaching colleague as part of her normal Social Studies programme and gifted to me to use in my study. The girls were given the task to research the role models/icons that they felt would be important to girls. They were asked to choose the 12 most popular nominees. The photographs were mounted on playing cards (6.5 x 9cms), and laminated for presentation to the participants. They were identified by a number on the bottom edge of the photograph. Copies of the photographs were submitted to the Human Ethics Committee before presentation to the subjects and the principal of the school concerned had the right to withdraw any pictures deemed unsuitable for presentation. The chosen role models were:

1. God or Jesus – the photograph used for this icon was a copy of 19th century painting entitled “The Light of the World” by William Holman Hunt. It represented Jesus holding a lantern and knocking at a door.
2. Sarah Ulmer – a New Zealand Olympic and Commonwealth gold medallist in cycling. Despite retiring from competitive sport in 2007, she still features in television and magazine advertising.
3. The Queen – Queen Elizabeth II, the monarch of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. As New Zealand is a member of the Commonwealth, she is regarded as the reigning monarch of New Zealand.
4. Brooke Fraser – a popular and successful young New Zealand singer songwriter who was born in New Zealand, and is the daughter of a Fijian-born “All Black” rugby player. She expresses her strong Christian beliefs in her songs and during 2007 was the public face of World Vision in New Zealand.

5. Oprah Winfrey – an African-American television presenter who has a daily talk-show which can be seen on New Zealand television in the late afternoons. She also produces her own magazine and features regularly in media items.

6. Richie McCaw – a New Zealand rugby player who is a long-standing member of the “All Blacks” and the “Canterbury Crusaders”, the local team in the “Super 14” series. He is a well-known local figure. At the time of the study, he had been appointed as Captain of the team to tour France.

7. The Prime Minister – Helen Clark, the current Prime Minister of New Zealand, and the second woman to serve the country in this role. She is now in her third term of office.

8. Steve Irwin – a deceased Australian animal adventurer and television personality who demonstrated his empathy for animals and his ability to have close contact with dangerous Australian wildlife. He had died suddenly while filming underwater during 2006.

9. Kylie Minogue – a long-enduring Australian popular singer who, in her long career has had a reputation for raunchy costumes and dance routines to accompany her pop songs. She has been at the centre of intense media interest due to her failed relationships but recently was admired for returning to her career after suffering breast cancer.

10. Princess Diana – a member of the English Royal Family who had died tragically in a car crash 10 years ago. She was always at the centre of media attention and was admired for her philanthropic activities.

11. Reese Witherspoon – an American reputed to be the highest paid actress in 2007. She has played in several teen comedies and was recently in the media because of her divorce.

12. Jacqueline Wilson – an English bestselling and award-winning author of children's books. She writes realist stories about modern children facing problems in their daily life. The author visited New Zealand during 2007.

Process

The following procedure was used:

Display the collection of shuffled photographs

(I bring out the set of peer-generated cards and spread them on the table).

Now I am going to show you some photographs of people who you may or may not look up to.

1. Are there any people here that you recognize? Put the ones you recognize over here. *Remove the ones not recognized. Note the photographs indicated by the child.*

2. Are there any people that you look up to here? *Indicate photographs still on the table. Remove any photographs not chosen. Note the photographs indicated by the child.*

3. *Indicating each card and using the questions previously used in the interview section:*

a. What is it about that person that you look up to?

b. (Further follow-up question) Do you think you could do/be/achieve what they do?

4. Now we are going to look at your field map again. Can you show me how important these people are to you by placing them on the other side of your map?

Remember, the first circle closest to you shows the people you “totally look up to”;

the middle circle shows those people who you “look up to a lot”; the outside circle is for the people who you “look up to” but who you don’t think are as important as the others. Where will you put this one? *Repeat until all cards are positioned.*

5. Do you mind if I take another photograph to show where you have put these people you have chosen on your map? *Record field map digitally again.* I will give you a copy of this too.

Recording

The photographs recognized were noted on the note-taking form. The placement of the chosen peer-generated photographs was digitally photographed with the identifying letter for each child. The child’s answers were also recorded in written form.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the aspects of trustworthiness are intertwined and interrelated but despite the complexity “Research findings should be as trustworthy as possible and every research study must be evaluated in relation to the procedures used to generate the findings” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p.109).

Reliability

The issue of whether the research findings could be repeated or replicated by another researcher or at another point in time is difficult to assess when children’s development is so rapid and the social setting is so complex and multi-faceted. Repeating the investigation is probably not feasible and the exact replication is

problematic. The study must be taken as a snapshot of a specific group of girls at one point in time of their development. Reliability however, also refers to the quality of the field notes, audio-tapes, transcripts and digital-photographs that were part of my data collection. The last three methods of recording were invaluable for methodically rechecking and cross-checking the data.

Validity

The combination of the interview questions and task activities in conjunction with my previous knowledge of the girls provided me with rich data to analyse. Given that Dockett and Perry (2007, p.49) claimed, a ‘truthful perspective’, can be obtained from individuals on one specific occasion in one specific context and is the result of a neutral but collaborative endeavour, the need for validity was addressed.

In their research on children’s suggestibility, Bruck, Ceci and Hembrooke (1998) cited social factors that may lead to the desire to please powerful figures. I was aware that my position as a researcher could compromise the validity of the girls’ answers. To minimize the effect of suggestibility, I stressed that it was their opinions and views that I valued and that there were no right or wrong answers. I was aware of maintaining an impartial tone and of not positively acknowledging statements, whereas in reality, as an inexperienced interviewer, I found this a challenge. During the transcribing process and when rereading the transcripts later, I noticed that I had actually used words of encouragement or acknowledgement, such as “Right”, “All right”, “Good girl” that could have been taken as reinforcement of what the child was offering. I had deliberately framed bland, unembroidered questions and endeavoured to maintain the same strategies throughout the 12 interviews but keeping to the format

of the interview was sometimes at the expense of “rich data”. I think this was due to nervousness and inexperience particularly when the flow of responses from some of the girls seemed strained.

Children are unlikely to deliberately mislead or conceal (Brooker, 2001, p. 168). They are more likely to give honest answers appropriate to their age and understanding. The fact that I knew most of the girls well meant that I was sometimes aware or suspicious when their answers appeared to be an attempt to please me. Talking through my thoughts with my supervisors helped me gain clarity and check my assumptions. I realized that although I had the advantage of knowing most of the girls well, it was dangerous to make assumptions based on this knowledge. I was conscious my view could be a different interpretation from the one other people could gain from the text. This was a valuable support mechanism giving me increased confidence and made me question the answers the girls gave.

Fieldwork is a reflective process. I made anecdotal notes as I transcribed the audio-tapes and as I reworked the transcripts into meaning units and eventually into narratives. These followed the positive or negative coding system suggested by Tolich and Davidson (1996) and enabled me to question or note my suspicions without relying on memory. The goal of “negative coding alerts the researcher to the shortcomings in the data collection techniques” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p.151) and hopefully, by using this auditing strategy, I improved the validity of the results.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a further strategy for cross-validating the data and “emphasizes the importance of looking at the data in different ways” (Dockett & Perry 2007, p.52).

The procedure of examining the data from different perspectives was accomplished through the use of the field mapping task to look at the research context in a way that appealed to the age and interest level of the children. The utilization of the peer-generated icons in conjunction with the interview and field-mapping process also presented another perspective to collect meaningful data about the social phenomena being investigated.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence in how well the data and processes of analysis addressed the intended focus of the research (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The school population provided the appropriate age range of girls, and the randomly selected participants contributed to a rich source of data with which to study the phenomena. The methods selected for the study were appropriate for the age group, interested them, and provided a structured framework to elicit the data required to address the questions I wanted to ask. The recording of the data was tackled by a variety of methods. Taking full field notes proved to be a very difficult task as I was unable to maintain the flow of the interview as well as keep up with the writing, therefore, the audio-taping of each interview was a superb strategy and enabled me to ensure that no data was missed. Digital photography was also an excellent way to record the field mapping data. It enabled me to cross-check in conjunction with the field notes and audio-tapes as to the accuracy of data collection.

Another critical issue for achieving credibility is to select the most suitable meaning units for analysing the data. I selected the family, the school, popular media, books, any other significant areas, and the peer-generated icons as my main meaning units.

These areas were broad and probably contained several themes but I did not want to lose the meaning of the text during the condensation and abstraction process. Moving backwards and forwards from the transcripts, to the reworked texts ensured that no valuable and relevant data was missed. According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004, p.110), one way of approaching this, is to include representative quotations from the transcribed text and this was a strategy I used. Trustworthiness of interpretations in qualitative research deal with the most probable interpretation gained from a particular perspective. I strove to not impute meaning and let the text speak for itself.

Summary

“Methodology is the system employed as the means of inquiry” (Coll, 2002, p.2). I chose to use a qualitative methodology to explore the concepts of who young girls look up to because qualitative “researchers want to know what the participants in a study are thinking and why they think what they do” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p.443). Qualitative methods can produce a wealth of detailed data and I hoped that my research design would yield rich data to evaluate. Throughout the process, in spite of my inexperience, my aim was to ensure that the reader would have a high degree of confidence in what I had seen or heard so my research would be a valuable and trustworthy contribution to provide an understanding of the phenomena.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The motivation for conducting my research grew from my concern caused by the APA Task Force Report on Sexualization of Girls (2007) and the intense and sensationalized press reaction to the report. My experiences as a teacher led me to believe that girls are more discerning and resilient than the popular press claimed. I set out to investigate:

1. Who are the role models for young girls?
2. Do young girls look up to people they know or famous people?
3. How highly do they rate their nominated role models?
4. What qualities about their role models do the girls respect, admire, wish to emulate, or find inspiring?
5. Do the girls think their role model's achievements are attainable?

Listening to the girls

Listening to the girls in order to make claims about what they feel, believe or experience is not as straightforward as it may seem. While attending to the contradictions and inconsistencies that characterize interview texts, I also had to consider the issues surrounding being a researcher in a situation where I had known most of the girls over a long period of time. On the one hand, the relationship between us made the initial rapport-establishing task easier. It also enabled me to recognize some of the issues that the girls alluded to in their interviews. On the other hand, there was an inherent danger, that because of my previous knowledge, I could jump to incorrect assumptions. It must be acknowledged that the results reflect my interpretation of the data based on my previous in-depth knowledge of the girls but that each interview can be interpreted from different points of view. Listening is the

active process of attending to meaning (Currie, Kelly & Pomerantz, 2007, p.377). During the interview sessions, I stressed that there were no right or wrong answers and that it was the girls' opinions that I valued. I also tried to keep my replies to the girls' comments as neutral as possible. However, in reality, when I reread the transcripts, it was obvious that on occasions I had inadvertently used phrases that could have been taken as evaluative praise affecting the responses of some participants. When the challenging task of working over the transcripts to write up an academically meaningful narrative was undertaken, it was also important to keep my interpretation as close to the intention of each girl as possible and not impose my own assumptions.

Each interview was transcribed, reworked into meaningful units, and a narrative was written for each participant as described in the Methodology Chapter. The transcript, the field map photograph and the narrative relevant to each girl became my working focus. I have included four of the narratives at the beginning of this chapter to give an indication of the data collected from the girls concerning the people they look to at a specific point in time. The four narratives chosen give an indication of the responses the girls gave across the age group. I am not claiming that the narratives presented are representative of the whole sample.

Celia (5 years-old)

Context

I started by collecting Celia from her classroom straight after lunchtime. Walking along the corridor, she maintained a constant stream of chatter about activities that were happening in the hall. She settled quickly when we started the interview and was quick to verbalize her answers and add other comments.

What did I learn from Celia about the people she looked up to?

I asked Celia about the people she looked up to. She identified two family members, her mother and her older brother as people she ‘totally’ looked up to (as indicated by the field-mapping task, Celia transcript, l.130 & 148). Celia thought it was because her mum was “nice” (Celia transcript, l.15) that she looked up to her, and in the case of her brother, it was because of the “cuddles” he gave her (Celia transcript, l.109). Celia considered it possible that she could be like her brother. She said: “I give my mummy cuddles sometimes, that’s why I could be like him” (Celia transcript, l. 111-112), but she was less elaborate about whether she could be like her mum. When I asked if she could do what her mother did, Celia responded affirmatively but with a degree of uncertainty: “I think so” (Celia transcript, l. 19). It may have been that she saw the task of being similar to her mother as more daunting. However, the difference in the response was noted.

Celia went on to identify her teacher as someone she ‘looked up to a lot’ (Celia transcript, l. 134), and another teacher figure, this time from “Wicked Science”, [a television programme about two teenagers who get hit by a unique magnetic pulse which suddenly turns them into scientific geniuses], as someone she also ‘looked up to’ (Celia transcript, l. 40-44). Celia cited her teacher’s “good teaching” and “good artwork” (Celia transcript, l. 24 & 26) and the television teacher’s “good science” (Celia transcript, l. 63) as reasons why she looked up to them. While Celia said she could envisage achieving what her teacher could do, “I make pretty good artwork ...” (Celia transcript, l.28), she responded with a resounding “no” (Celia transcript, l. 70), when asked the same question about the teacher on the television. This teacher conducted his experiments by magic and I suspected that Celia had a grasp on reality

when she so firmly stressed that it was an unrealistic possibility for her to achieve the same.

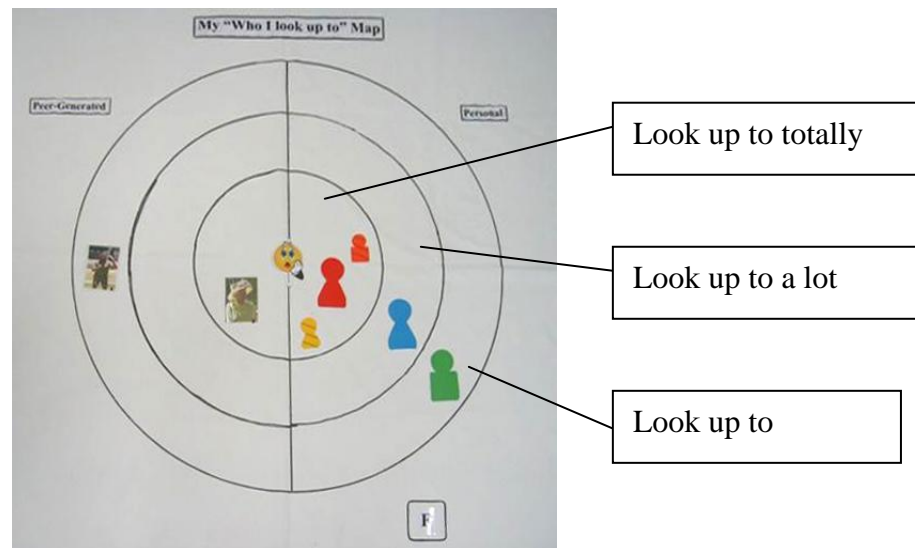


Figure 2 : Photograph of Celia's field map

Look up to totally:	Small orange icon is her brother. Large red icon is her mother. Small yellow icon is "Sally" from a school reading book. Peer-generated icon: The Queen
Look up to a lot:	Large blue icon is her teacher.
Look up to:	Large green icon is a teacher from a television programme called "Wicked Science". Peer-generated icon: Steve Irwin

Celia chose a book character "Sally" [a character from a school reading book, "Sally and the Sparrows" by Jenny Giles, 1996], (Celia, l. 77), whom she indicated that she 'totally looked up to' (Celia transcript, l. 142). It was Sally's "golden brown hair" (Celia transcript, l. 84) and her care of animals, "...she fed the sparrows. That's pretty nice" (Celia transcript, l.86-87), that Celia 'looked up to'. She considered it possible that she might be able to do the things that Sally did and she drew a parallel with an event in her own life to illustrate how, "...because I've been feeding the ducks before. It's a bit like feeding the sparrows", (Celia transcript, l. 93-94). It may have been that because Celia had experienced lived events and knew that it was a realistic

achievement, and that Sally also had similar physical features to herself that she rated Sally so highly on the field-map.

Celia recognized five of the peer-generated icons and chose two of them as people she 'looked up to'. The first was a picture of the Queen and the second, the recently deceased Australian adventurer, Steve Irwin. When I asked what it was about the Queen that she 'looked up to', Celia said, "She looks like my auntie" (Celia transcript, l. 185). Like the previous acknowledgement of Sally, it was Steve Irwin's "...taking care of animals" (Celia transcript, l. 193) that Celia identified as the thing she 'looked up to' in him. In the field-mapping task, Celia rated the Queen as someone she 'totally looked up to' (Celia transcript, l. 208) and Steve Irwin as someone she just 'looked up to' (Celia transcript, l. 209-210). Even though Celia felt she could identify with the things Steve Irwin could do, "...mmm, I've got a pet dog and feeding a pet dog. Anyway, I could do that" (Celia transcript, l.195-196), she rated him in relative terms, further away than the Queen even though she didn't think she could do the things the Queen did. "I can't look like her!" (Celia transcript, l. 190), Celia exclaimed laughingly when I asked her if she thought she could do the things the Queen could do. I wondered why she rated the Queen so highly as someone she 'totally looked up to'.

Summary

The people identified by Celia as role models appear to have close personal relevance for her. She identified her mother, her brother, her teacher, a girl from her reading book and when she selected a peer-generated photograph, it was the Queen because she bore a resemblance to her aunt. Apart from familial ties and respect for the skill of

teachers, kindness, caring for others and nurturing were qualities that seem to stand out particularly in the ‘look up to totally’ category.

Celia appears to be socially categorizing her world and developing skills related to a realistic sense of social comparison (Pelham & Wachmuth, 1995). She compared herself to “Sally” in her reading book who fed the sparrows and reasoned she could do that “...because I’ve been feeding the ducks before. It’s a bit like feeding the sparrows”, (Celia transcript, l. 93-94. She had placed those personal nominated people who showed traits that she thought she could achieve closest to her. She identified both female and male role models.

Throughout the interview, Celia was relaxed and keen to talk. Her contributions were spontaneous and natural. At one point when discussing the science teacher from the television programme she enjoyed, she commented “I wonder why all the teachers in this school are just ladies” (Celia transcript, l. 58). This was a very interesting observation from a 5 year-old and I would have liked to have had the opportunity to follow up on her line of thinking but I felt constrained by the interviewing schedule.

Gina (7 years-old)

Context

I collected Gina after lunch from her classroom. As usual, she talked in an animated manner about an impending trip overseas. When we were ready to start the session, she settled down to the task.

What did I learn from Gina about the people she looked up to?

I asked Gina about the people she looked up to. She looked anxious and was undecided at first as who to name in her family. She firstly identified her brother then changed her mind, “I can’t decide. I don’t know. I look up to all my family”, (Gina transcript, l. 20). In response to be asked if there was anyone in particular, she chose her grandfather as someone she ‘totally looked up to’ (as indicated by the field-mapping task, Gina transcript, l.127). Gina thought it was because “he’s just really good at doing things...just really good at all types of things” (Gina transcript, l. 25-26). As she went on to talk about her grandfather, it seemed to be his cooking ability in particular that she ‘looked up to’, “...he does do a lot of baking which Grandma used to do and I especially like the ‘nuts and bolts’ [‘nuts and bolts’ are a cereal sprinkled in salt and sugar] that he makes”, (Gina transcript, l. 32-33). When I asked her if she could do what her grandfather did, she appeared to consider whether it was possible but lacked confidence to say for sure, “Umm, I think I can if I try” (Gina transcript l. 32).

Gina went on to identify three people, a peer, a television character, and a book character as people she ‘looked up to a lot’ (Gina transcript, l. 134; 138; 142) citing her reasons for choosing them as their ability to deal with difficult personal situations. When commenting on her peer, it is seemed to be the peer’s ability to walk away from difficult situations that held resonance for Gina, “...I have fights with people and when she hits other people, she just walks away. She doesn’t have a big argument. And some people do try to boss me around, so I try to be like Joy and just walk away” (Gina transcript, l. 41-43). Her nominated book character, Milly Molly Mandy, the central figure out of the “Milly Molly Mandy” series (Lankester Brisley, 1960), also

showed desirable traits: “well, she doesn’t ask for things, she just, erm, she just earns them. She doesn’t say ‘when I get, when I do something good I get a treat’, she just does something then she gets what she is probably hoping for” (Gina transcript, l. 85-87). When I asked her if she ‘looked up to Milly Molly Mandy because she did not expect rewards, she replied “She gets them but she doesn’t expect them” (Gina transcript, l. 90) and contrasted it with her own actions: “At the moment, I am a bit...I do sometimes say...when I’m good,...but I try not to ‘cause at the moment I am earning money to go to a special place next holidays. When I’m good I get ...err” (Gina transcript, l. 93-95). It sounded as though this may have been an issue she had been experiencing at home.

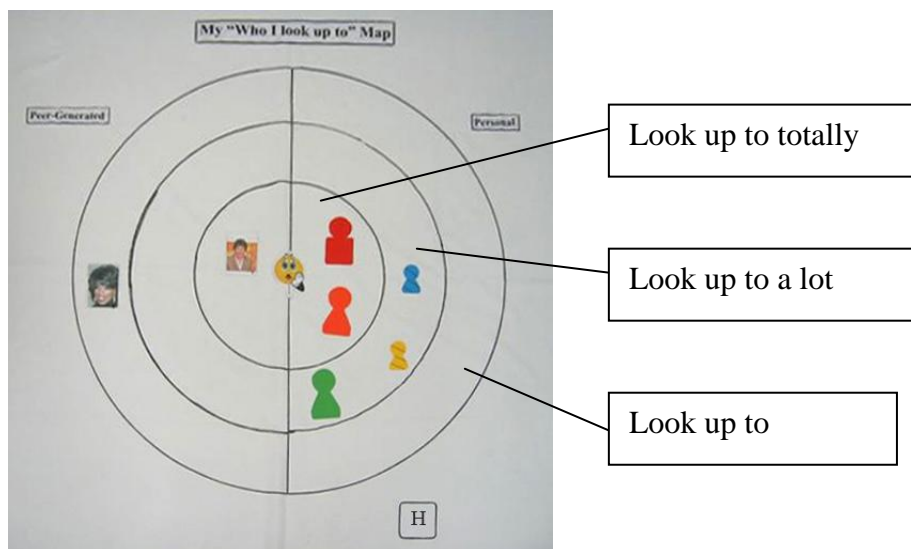


Figure 3 : Photograph of Gina’s field map

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Look up to totally: | Large red icon is her grandfather.
Large orange icon is Mrs Wright, head of school/researcher. |
| Look up to a lot: | Peer-generated icon: Helen Clark, the Prime Minister
Small blue icon is a school peer.
Small yellow icon is the book character, “Milly Molly Mandy” from the “ <u>Milly Molly Mandy</u> ” series.
Large green icon is a character, “Hannah Montana” who is an actress/singer/song-writer, in the television series, “Hannah Montana”. |
| Look up to: | Peer-generated icon: Oprah Winfrey |

Her television character, a teenage actor-singer-songwriter called “Hannah Montana” from the television show of the same name [“Hannah Montana” is the story of a teenager who leads a normal school life during the day but turns into a successful singer by night], was identified by Gina for the “really good words” (Gina transcript, l. 66-67) she used in her song: “You can’t boss me around, I can be whoever I want to be” (Gina transcript, l. 67-68). These words obviously hit a chord with Gina and I wondered if that was what she would have liked to have said to some of the people in her peer group or adults in her family or school situation. Gina did not seem overly confident that she could act as these three personally-identified people had done. When I asked her if she felt she could achieve as they had, her reply was “probably” (Gina transcript, l. 45), “...I do want to be a singer so probably yes” (Gina, transcript l. 73) or she answered indirectly avoiding the issue: “...I am a bit...I do sometimes say...when I’m good” (Gina transcript, l. 93).

I suspected that issues revolving around social problem-solving may have been dominating Gina’s thoughts at the time of the interview. She had chosen people to look up to who presented a model of how to tackle difficult situations successfully. She described situations where Milly Molly Mandy and her peer, Joy, acted in a way that was in her eyes a commendable way to act in difficult circumstances and, I suspected these characters were seen by Gina as receiving positive feedback from adults. She went on to contrast their strategies with her own, which I guessed had brought her into conflict with both her peers and adults. In the face of this inner conflict, I had the feeling she empathized with the words of Hannah Montana’s song “You can’t boss me around, I can be whoever I want to be” (Gina transcript, l. 67-68).

When asked if there was anyone else Gina ‘looked up to’, she nominated me and said it was because “you’re a really good example for the teachers in school. It means they won’t tell lies or something like that” (Gina transcript, l. 104-6). I wondered if it was an attempt to gain attention from me or whether Gina was again focussing on her own difficult decision-making problems for when she chose two of the peer-generated icons as persons she ‘looked up to’ one was Helen Clark, the Prime Minister, and a similar reason emerged: “...just like you she never tells lies. I think you and the Prime Minister are just the same, ...you’re the head of the school and she’s the head of the country. It’s kind of the same” (Gina transcript, l. 170-172). She placed us both in the ‘totally look up to’ category (Gina transcript, l. 145; 204) and felt that was a possibility that she could achieve in a similar manner although she sounded more confident about Helen Clark, “yes” (Gina transcript l. 175) than she did about me, “I think so” (Gina transcript, l. 109).

Gina had recognized four of the peer-generated icons but only identified two as people to look up to. In addition to the Prime Minister, she chose Oprah Winfrey although she was not quite sure who she was, “I think she is a singer, I can’t quite remember” (Gina transcript l. 178), then she muttered under her breath, “I don’t know. I look up to a lot of people but I don’t really know why I do. I just really love the person who is a good example”, (Gina transcript, l. 180-181). I wondered if she was looking to me for acknowledgement. I further questioned Gina and asked her why she thought Oprah Winfrey was a good example, and she mentioned the singing again (Gina transcript, l. 184) but also added an element of physical attraction “...I like her ear-rings!” (Gina transcript, l. 189).

Summary

The people identified by Gina appeared to have some relevance for the social problem solving she was tackling. In her reasons for choosing her role models, there is a sense of right and wrong, and good decision making as factors for the people she looked up to. There was a strong indication that people who were important, the Prime Minister, and the head of the school, who she perceived as making sensible moral decisions were relevant to her struggle. Joy, her chosen classmate in school and Milly Molly Mandy her book character, were also admired for their success in dealing with social problems. Gina was probably trying to internalize these strategies. During the interview, they could have been at the forefront of her thinking and of how she perceived herself in comparison to others. Gina could have been worried about how she could achieve a similar level of success as her personally identified role models but was more positive about the 'pop princesses' such as Hannah Montana and Oprah Winfrey. I was interested that when she chose these personalities, it was not for their physical attractiveness. The choice ties in with her love of singing and her playground activities where she is seen organizing singing and dancing shows. She is usually 'centre stage', 'performing' for her group. These activities give her the opportunity to gain positive attention and feedback from her peers.

I was anxious during this interview that Gina was giving me responses that she thought I would like to hear, particularly when she chose me as one of her people. Despite her cheerful attitude towards taking part in the session, she might have been so concerned about the difficult interactions she had experienced recently with adults that she was seeking some positive attention and approval from me. I frequently talk to all the children in school about wise decision making and she may have been

indirectly telling me through her responses, that she was seriously making an effort to tackle these issues.

Anna (10 years-old)

Context

I collected Anna from the hall where she was watching older children perform. On the way over to my office, we chatted about her family. It was the last interview session for the day. As we prepared to start the session, I felt that Anna was anxious or a little uncomfortable, but she said she was happy to start.

What did I learn from Anna about the people she looked up to?

I asked Anna about the people she looked up to. When asked whom she looked up to in her family, she quickly identified her mother (Anna transcript, 1.12). She attributed the closest degree of importance to her mother placing her in the ‘look up to totally’ position (Anna transcript, 1.89). I was not surprised by this as I had previously observed that the bond between the two had always seemed strong and supportive. However, when I asked Anna why she looked up to her mother, she appeared anxious and embarrassed. After a long wait and a few gentle encouraging comments, she commented: “because of all the things she teaches me” (Anna, transcript, 1.20). She did not think it possible to achieve what her mother did (Anna transcript, 1.23). I wish that I had deviated from the interview protocol and asked why she felt that she could not do this.

When I went on to ask her if there was anyone she looked up to in school, Anna answered “Not really” (Anna transcript, 1.26). Later, she was happy to name an older

girl, her house captain (Anna transcript, 1.63). Anna decided that she would put this older peer into the ‘look up to a bit’ position on her field map (Anna transcript, 1.92). She said that she chose the house captain “Because she is kind and helpful, and she knows what she is doing” (Anna transcript, 1.66). Anna thought that these were things to which she could aspire (Anna transcript, 1.68).

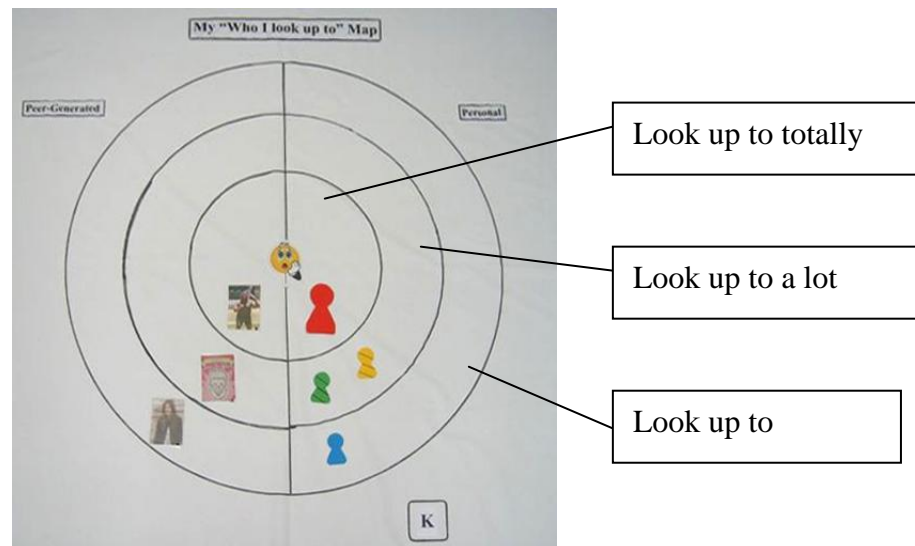


Figure 4 : Photograph of Anna's field map

Look up to totally:	Large red icon is her mother.
Look up to a lot:	Peer-generated icon: Steve Irwin Small yellow icon is a cartoon character, “Kim Possible”. Small green icon is “Hermione” from the “ <u>Harry Potter</u> ” series.
Look up to:	Peer-generated icon: Jacqueline Wilson Small blue icon is a house captain. Peer-generated icon: Brooke Fraser

Anna quickly identified someone she looked up to from the popular media area. She nominated a television cartoon character called “Kim Possible” (Anna transcript, 1.33). She placed this teen-aged crime-fighter figure, who tackles worldwide, family and school issues, in the ‘look up to a lot’ area of her field map making her less significant than her mother but more than her house captain (Anna transcript, 1.96). Anna specified the reason for nominating this “Kim Possible” character: “She saves the world from villains” and “helps people” (Anna transcript, 1.37 & 40). She thought

that ‘saving the world from villains’ was not a realistic objective for herself (Anna transcript, 1.47).

Anna nominated “Hermione Granger” out of the “Harry Potter” series (Rowling, 2007) as her book character that she looked up to (Anna transcript, 1.55). She put Hermione in the ‘look up to a lot’ section of her field map alongside Kim Possible (Anna transcript, 1.99). Anna said she had chosen Hermione because “She’s good at school and...she knows everything” (Anna transcript, 1.58). She thought that she might be able to succeed to a small degree in achieving what Hermione could do (Anna transcript, 1.60).

When asked if there was any one else that she looked up to, Anna could not think of anyone else to include (Anna transcript, 1.74). I noted that all Anna’s personally nominated people were females. I wondered if this could be related to the influence of strong female role models within her family who play an important part in Anna’s daily life collecting her from school and supporting her school activities.

Anna recognized six peer-generated icons and chose three cards that she looked up to. She chose Brooke Fraser, Jacqueline Wilson, and Steve Irwin, (Anna transcript, 1.110 & 113). Anna placed Brooke Fraser in the ‘look up to’ position (Anna transcript, 1.113), citing her good singing as the reason for her placement (Anna transcript, 1.120) although she did not think this was something that she could emulate (Anna transcript, 1.122). I knew Anna was a member of the school choir and had a lovely voice but did not recall her ever taking a solo role. I wondered if she preferred the security and anonymity of singing within a group rather than being the focus of a ‘starring role’

and although she did not mention it, I considered that she might admire Brooke Fraser for her confidence in singing on her own. I also wondered if Anna felt an affinity to Brooke Fraser's Fijian family background being of Māori descent herself. She also nominated the author, Jacqueline Wilson, for skill in her respective field: "She's good at writing books and all her books are interesting" (Anna transcript, l.130). She placed her in the 'look up to a lot' position (Anna transcript, l.142). Anna also thought she could attempt to write books and might achieve "a bit" of success (Anna transcript, l.132).

Anna placed Steve Irwin, the deceased animal adventurer, in the 'look up to totally' position (Anna transcript, l.140). She chose to do this because she felt he was kind to animals (Anna transcript, l.125). This was something that Anna thought she could attempt (Anna transcript, l.127).

Summary

Anna had nominated only one adult in her personal selection, her mother, whom she placed in the 'totally look up to' segment of her map. The rest were peer-aged females who were less significant. She paid more importance to her two fictional characters rather than her school peer whom she had placed in the least significant section. I wondered if the lack of girls of Māori background in school meant she had few peers to look up to.

Anna seemed to demonstrate strong aspirations towards female role models. The reasons she gave for nominating her people in both her personal selection and the peer-generated group were for the nurturing traits of kindness, helpfulness, and for

teaching her things. She also seemed to admire people who were good at things: singing, writing, school activities and were competent and successful. Throughout her time in school, Anna's nurturing attitude towards others has been noted. She is also a choir member and a talented artist. I wondered if her confidence in these areas had a bearing on her choices of whom she looked up to. The traits of her nominated people could also be traits that are regarded as the traditional gender-specific stereotypes for women and are traits that her mother and supporting aunties from her whānau would model. She identified only one male person that she felt she looked up to, Steve Irwin, but she chose him for his kindness rather than his amazing feats with dangerous animals.

I was worried at the beginning of the interview that Anna felt uncomfortable as she appeared embarrassed and I could see her face growing redder as we progressed. Her answers in the beginning portion of the interview were short, one-word answers and she needed time to consolidate her ideas. I was conscious of trying to encourage her to contribute. I was surprised by the difficulty we were experiencing, as in the past, all our interactions had been positive ones. I wondered if her initial discomfort was caused by the fact that she was alone with me in 'my office' in a situation where her ideas were the focus of attention. She may have been happier to have been part of a group, when the attention would have been shared. Despite this tentative start, it turned out to be a fruitful session that she appeared to enjoy in the end.

Emma (12 years-old)**Context**

I collected Emma from the practice that was going on in the hall. We chatted about her family on the way to my office. She was cheerful and animated and ready to settle down to the tasks.

What did I learn from Emma about the people she looked up to?

As the interview schedule commenced, I asked Emma about the people she looked up to. From her thoughtful answers, I suspected that she took the phrase ‘look up to’ to mean someone who provided inspiration and had struggled against the odds to succeed. From the people she identified, there was only one, Richie McCaw, whom she felt she could emulate with a certain degree of success (Emma transcript, 1.155). She placed Richie McCaw in the ‘look up to totally’ position (Emma transcript, 1.161) because “He’s a great sports star. He’s managed to become the captain of many teams” (Emma transcript, 1.152-153). I suspected Emma felt that she could succeed in a sporting field because she is also a skilled sports player. In the case of all her other choices, Emma clearly explained the traits that she admired but she made it equally clear that she did not feel she could achieve in a similar manner, and in one case exclaimed “Oh no, definitely not” (Emma transcript, 1.28).

Emma seemed to have a special admiration for people who had experienced a struggle in life, but, through endurance and consistency, had achieved against the odds in their particular field. Her mother provided her with a clear example of someone who had succeeded in this challenge: “The fact, like, where she was before I was born, like going from being a poor family and not being able to afford decent meals all the time

to being the owner of a successful business” (Emma transcript, l.14-16). Oprah Winfrey was also chosen because “she has done so much with her life” (Emma transcript, l.127-128). Although she did not elaborate further, I suspected that she thought that Oprah had been successful in her career moves against the odds too.

When I first asked Emma if there was anyone she looked up to in the area of television or the movies, she expressed the opinion that there was really not much point in looking up to television or movie characters because “they’re all sort of fake, not real” (Emma transcript, l. 31) and went on to say “it’s just the programme [“Home and Away”] that I like. There’s no point in actually liking anyone. It’s how the writers have actually made them” (Emma transcript, l. 36-37). It seemed that Emma appreciated the story-line of the programmes she watched but had the maturity to make discriminatory judgements and regarded the characters with a degree of scepticism.

Later in the interview, she chose Jason Gunn, a television show-host and presenter, as someone she looked up to on television (Emma transcript, l. 64). When she was weighing up if she could achieve in a similar manner to Jason Gunn, she commented “probably not. I’d be more... I don’t think I would be fully committed to my work and family equally. It would have to be one or the other (Emma transcript, l.72-73). I guessed the stability and fragility of family life was very important to her, as Emma commended Jason Gunn for his ability to create a successful career and also maintain his family life (Emma transcript, l.69-70). Although Emma did not mention it, Jason Gunn’s challenge to balance family and career mirrored a similar challenge faced by her mother. From her previous comments, I guessed that she was very proud of her

mother's achievements. When I asked Emma if she felt she could achieve what her mother had achieved, she had answered in a guarded manner: "I think if I really put my mind to it, then maybe" ((Emma transcript, l. 18). I thought that perhaps she was considering the difficult balance between work and family and knew from personal experience that this could be challenging.

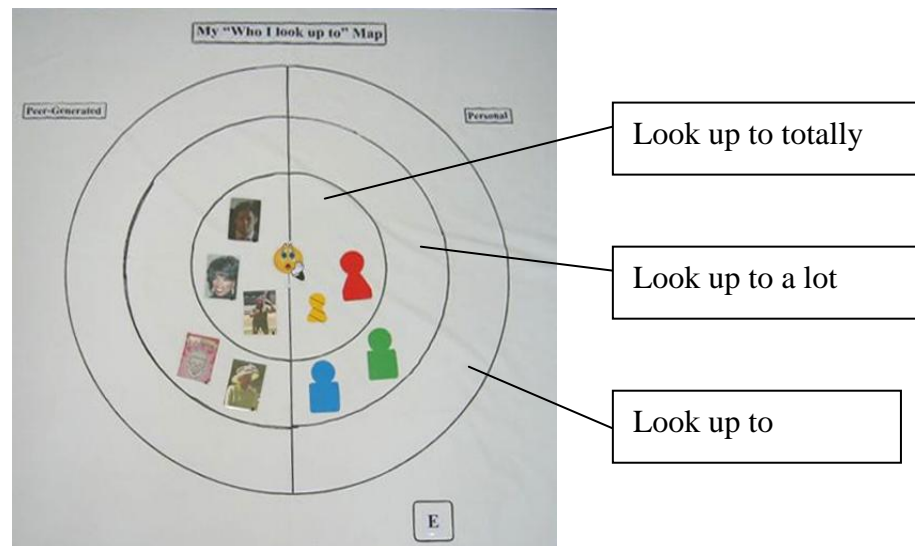


Figure 5 : Photograph of Emma's field map

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Look up to totally: | Large red icon is her mother.
Small yellow icon is a girl in the book, " <u>My Sister's Keeper</u> ". |
| Look up to a lot: | Peer-generated icons: Steve Irwin, Oprah Winfrey and Richie McCaw
Large blue icon is her maths teacher.
Large green icon is the television presenter, Jason Gunn.
Peer-generated icons: The Queen and Jacqueline Wilson |

When I asked Emma who she looked up to in school, she nominated a male teacher who took her for Mathematics (Emma transcript, l.22). She admired this teacher because "he's so cheerful all the time no matter what happens and he takes us for Maths and he is never ever grumpy" (Emma transcript, l.25-26). She thought it was amusing when I asked her if she thought she could achieve in a similar manner and was definite in her reply to the negative: "Oh no, definitely not" (Emma transcript, l.28). I thought that this acknowledgement reflected Emma's mature and realistic view of herself. She considered that the teacher's consistent cheerfulness and good nature,

despite the challenging classroom stresses, was admirable but she realized that it was not a model she could thought she could succeed in emulating.

Emma was willing to choose a fictional book character whom she looked up to. The character she had chosen was a girl from a story called "My Sister's Keeper" (Picoult, 2004) and was the only peer-aged person she nominated during her interview. This story presented a dilemma which appeared to have forced her to think deeply about the implications for a family when one member was experiencing a life-threatening illness. This character had obviously made an impression on her as she was placed into the 'look up to totally' position (Emma transcript, 1.97). Emma thoughtfully elaborated on what it was she admired about the girl: "she's put her life on the line for her sister so many times because her sister was born with kidney failure and so she is continually giving blood and giving organs" (Emma transcript, 1.48-50). It appeared that she had considered the situation and, perhaps in the light of actually having a younger sibling herself, could visualize the dilemma faced by the family. She felt that it would be difficult to make the same sacrifice as her nominated book character had done and commented "I don't think that I would find it very fair" (Emma transcript, 1.57).

Emma recognized 11 out of the 12 the peer-generated icons. The one she did not recognize was Sarah Ulmer, the Olympic cyclist. She went on to choose five as people that she looked up to. She picked out Richie McCaw, Oprah Winfrey, and Steve Irwin as people she 'totally looked up to' (Emma transcript, 1.161, 164 & 165), and Jacqueline Wilson and the Queen as worthy of the 'look up to a lot' category (Emma transcript, 1.163 & 164). Her admiration of Steve Irwin was due to her opinion

that “he’s touched heaps of children’s lives. My little brother really, really likes him. He looks up to him so much,” (Emma transcript, l.133-134). Whereas with Jacqueline Wilson, the author, and the Queen, it was their perseverance and consistency that she commented on: “All the books she has written, she still manages to keep a consistent flow, but she has completely different ideas for each book” [Jacqueline Wilson] (Emma transcript, l.140-141); “The fact that she has consistent power over everyone, she still manages to look, act orderly all the time” [The Queen] (Emma transcript, l.146-147). I noticed that Emma admired people who stuck to a task whatever the odds.

Summary

Emma’s reasons for identifying people reflected her thoughtfulness about people who had experienced life struggles, which was perhaps a mirror of lived experiences in her own family. She obviously admired them for consistency and perseverance under difficult conditions. Her mother, Oprah Winfrey, the Queen, her book character, Jacqueline Wilson, and her teacher all portrayed these skills. It was noticeable that Emma mainly chose adults as people she looked up to but the sole peer-aged person she chose was the book character from “My Sister’s Keeper” who also portrayed unselfish personal strength against the odds. Emma identified both male and female people whom she looked up to. Richie McCaw and Steve Irwin were placed in the ‘totally look up to’ category, while her teacher and Jason Gunn were people she looked up to ‘a lot’. Out of all the people Emma identified she was only confident that she could emulate Richie McCaw, probably because of her own strength in sport. Emma regarded the rest as inspirational rather than models for imitation and her laughter

reflected the fact that she did not consider that she would even tackle what they had done. Emma appeared to be able to reason what was realistic to achieve herself.

This interview seemed to flow naturally. Emma appeared to be at ease and was willing to share her opinion. I appreciated the thoughtful comments she made and did not feel under pressure to encourage her to contribute. I was impressed by the discerning comments she made about the shallowness of characters in television and the videos. She gave me the feeling that despite her youth, she was developing her confidence and resilience to withstand the outside pressures and challenges that life throws up and achieve success herself.

From the shared views of the girls, I broke the narratives up to draw together the data about each of the meaning units: the family, school, popular media, books, other significant people and the peer-generated icons that they considered they looked up to.

Who were the people that girls looked up to in their families?

The 12 girls chose 17 family members as people they looked up to, this included the family dog and a friend of a parent as “it’s wonderful. She’s actually more like family than a friend” (Nina transcript, l. 101-102). Apart from the dog and the close family friend, seven mothers, one father, three older brothers, two grandfathers and two adult cousins were nominated. 12 of this family group were regarded by the girls as worthy of being looked up to totally. The nurturing trait was most frequently cited as the reason why their family member was so important to them. Sharing activities and the transmission of skills were also important characteristics, particularly in regard to the mother and grandparent relationships.

Seven out of the 12 girls in the study had named their mother as someone they looked up to and five of those girls had placed their mother in the 'look up to totally' position. Mothers appeared to have been nominated for a wide variety of reasons from their nurturing: "She's really nice to me sometimes" (Celia transcript, 1.15), "Because of all the things she teaches me" (Anna transcript, 1.20), "The fact that she is nice and is there to help me and my brother" (Pippa transcript, 1.22); their malleability: "Sometimes she says no but then she decides you can have something so if you were asking for a lolly she says no and then she changes her mind and always eats a lolly herself" (Lucy transcript, 1.18-20); their skills in the kitchen: "Her cooking because I like to cook" (Alice transcript, 1.28); and on the sports field: "She was a really good hockey player and sportsman and she was always really fit and clever as well (Sarah transcript, 1.27-28). In the case of one of the oldest girls, Emma, it seemed to be that she admired her mother's success in life at overcoming the odds and in achieving upward mobility:

The fact, like, where she was before I was born, like going from being a poor family and not being able to afford decent meals all the time to being the owner of a successful business (Emma transcript, 1.14-16).

I felt Emma almost attributed hero status to her mother. Her enthusiasm for choosing her was obvious as she answered "Definitely my Mum" (Emma transcript, 1. 11).

Older brothers were the next most frequently named member of the family to be chosen. One of the youngest children included her brother as someone she totally looked up to because of the cuddles he gave her (Celia transcript, 1.108). In contrast to the youngest girls, none of the 7 year-olds named a parent as a significant person to look up to. Instead, they all named brothers giving them varying degrees of

importance (Nina transcript, l.10; 127; Lorna transcript, l.12; 95; Gina transcript, l.16). Nina seemed to name her brother because of the caring role she offered him

Every day that we go to school, umm, sometimes if we go in Dad's car like we did today, he's a bit of a scaredy cat, because you know he is in the big school, he does not like Daddy closing the door because he thinks he's going to get locked out or something like that might happen. So I try to calm him down. It doesn't really work too much (Nina transcript, l.13-17).

Lorna cited her brother for mixed reasons that seemed to involve his friends: "he always uses things of mine, if his friends come in, I talk with his friends". "He never actually does mean things to me (Lorna transcript, l. 14-15; 18). Gina could not decide whether her step-brother was significant to her or not. She looked worried and when I told her not to worry, to take her time she changed her mind and said "I can't decide. I don't know. I look up to all my family". "I think my Grandad is really the person to look up to" (Gina transcript, l. 20; 23). Two girls chose their grandfathers. Gina decided that she liked the "nuts and bolts" he made:

He does do a lot of baking which my Grandma used to do and I especially like his 'nuts and bolts' that he makes (Gina transcript, l. 32-33).

They're not nuts and bolts. The bolts aren't bolts, they're little pieces of Nutrigrain that have got salt or something on them and the nuts are nuts. I like the nuts (Gina transcript, l. 35-37).

Bridie obviously loved the time spent with her grandfather too:

Because he lives on a farm, he gets like the dogs to follow all his different whistles and things, yeah (Bridie transcript, l. 13-14).

Well, my Grandpa has taught me how to do one whistle and the dogs always come to me when I do the whistles (Bridie transcript, l. 18-19).

These grandfathers were obviously regarded as special in the lives of these girls and were placed in the look up to totally position on the field map.

Adult cousins seemed to play an important part in the lives of two of the girls. Lorna, a 7 year-old, nominated an older female cousin, who spent time with her and offered her kindness:

She's really kind to me all the time and if she tells jokes, she'll tell me and let's me do anything I want to her (Lorna transcript, l. 69-70).

Bridie, 10 years-old, nominated an adult male cousin for being "really nice and really kind" to her (Bridie transcript, l. 86), while Nina, one of the 7 year-olds, nominated her mother's friend as someone she totally looked up because she was almost like family (Nina transcript, l.93; 95; 97). She obviously looked forward to spending time with this person. I wondered why these girls had been chosen older cousins and a family friend in preference to parents. I queried whether it was that their parents were busy people and these other adults showed they had time to spend with them or was it that the girls could spend pleasant time with these extended family figures devoid of any parent-child issues.

Molly was unique in the choice of her people. She named her father because he read her bedtime stories (Molly transcript, l.16) and included her dog as he possessed expert ball-handling skills and she enjoyed the playing with him: "It's because when I throw the ball he always gets it and brings it back to me" (Molly transcript, l.56).

It is clearly demonstrated from the data I collected that families play an important role in the lives of young girls. Most of the girls regarded their mothers as highly significant to them with the exception of the 7 year-old girls interviewed who looked towards other family members. The girls mainly looked up to their mothers for their nurturing attitude or the skills that they shared together. All three older girls seem to

have a more reflective way than the younger girls of looking at their mothers and their qualities, looking at the successes they had achieved over their life time.

Who were the people the girls looked up to at school?

The girls chose 13 people whom they considered worth looking up to in school, six teachers, five peers and two older school leaders, but they generally placed their school person in a less significant position to their family member. Only two children considered their chosen person to be worthy of being in the 'look up to totally' category and as this person was actually me in both cases, I was sceptical if this could be regarded as reliable evidence. However, two thirds of the girls claimed that they looked up to their nominated people 'a lot'. The girls appeared to look up to teachers in their school for their skills and personality:

Her good teaching (Celia transcript, 1.24).

Her good artwork (Celia transcript, 1.26).

Writing, I would say writing (Alice transcript, 1.38).

You're a really good example for the teachers in school. It means they won't tell lies or something like that (Gina transcript, 1.104-106).

She's a really good artist and when she wants us to draw something, she explains how to do it to us (Lucy transcript, 1.36-37).

Her skills in drawing and art (Pippa transcript, 1. 38).

He's so cheerful all the time no matter what happens and he takes us for Maths and he is never ever grumpy (Emma transcript, 1.25-26).

Emma, again, had nominated someone for his ability to persist against the odds when she praised her teacher for staying cheerful despite whatever happened in the classroom.

The 7 year-old girls chose friends in preference to teachers. Their friends were perceived as kind and appeared to be admired for their ability to solve social problem-solving issues:

I have fights with people and when she hits other people she just walks away, she doesn't have a big argument and some people do boss me around so I try to be like Joy and just walk away (Gina transcript, 1.41-43).

Well, she's always, like hanging around and playing games with people and I just feel they are happy games...And, well, she comes to my house for piano and stuff and she's always kind to the piano teacher and kind to little kids I have at my house (Lorna transcript, 1.29-30; 32-33).

As I read the older girl's opinions, the bond appeared to move from friends to peer-aged leaders who were prefects, or house captains and looked up to for their academic and sporting skills and their kind personalities.

She does lots of other special activities, like she gets into the zones and... (Bridie transcript, 1.32). ['zones' refers to the provincial team drawn from the top school players in the area]

Because she is kind and helpful, and she knows what she is doing (Anna transcript, 1.66).

She gets into the zone teams for hockey. She's also very clever. She's in the extension classes (Sarah transcript, 1.40-41).

Being chosen for the 'zones', appeared to hold special significance for the older girls and they admired their peers who had the sporting skills to achieve that status.

The girls placed most of their chosen school people into the 'look up to a lot' segment of the field map. This made them less significant than their family members. It was interesting to see that for the youngest and oldest girls teachers were important for the skills they imparted or their personality, whereas the 7 year-olds had chosen friends from their peer group, and the 9 and 10 year-olds looked up to older peers who held

leadership roles in the school. Kindness and skills in either solving social issues or sport appeared to be the main reasons for nominating their peers.

Who did the girls look up to on television, in videos or in magazines?

Seven out of the 12 girls named someone from television as a person they looked up to, while four chose video characters and only one personality was nominated from a magazine. The nominated figures varied from cartoon characters for the youngest girls (Alice transcript, 1.83; Nina transcript, 1.42), teenage singing-dancing characters for the 7 year-olds (Lorna transcript, 1.38; Gina transcript, 1.53), to a popular drama figure, a television presenter and a sports star for the older girls. Only two people who had been nominated in this section were placed in the 'look up to totally' category. They were both real-life sporting figures who had succeeded at a high level in the areas of sport to which the individual girls wanted to achieve (Sarah transcript, 1.57; Bridie transcript, 1.124). Most of the chosen people or characters were placed in either the 'look up to a lot' or the 'look up to a little' segment of the girls' field maps making them less significant than the family or school members. None of the girls mentioned a significant person from any of the supposedly popular magazines aimed at the 'teens' culture.

The youngest girls chose an interesting variety of fantasy characters that appealed to them. Alice chose a television cartoon character who, despite being a yellow sponge, was a cheerful and kind character: "I've thought of SpongeBob because I like to swim" (Alice transcript, 1.85). I was intrigued to know more about "SpongeBob". She explained: "...he's a sponge and his last name is SquarePants. SpongeBob SquarePants! And he wears square pants" (Alice transcript, 1.87-88). She further

described him: “kind of a man, he’s like a teenager” (Alice transcript, 1.92) and “SpongeBob is yellow” (Alice transcript, 1.97). The name of her character obviously appealed to Alice as she had fun saying it many times.

One of the 7 year-old girls also named a video cartoon character called “Chicken Little”, the main cartoon character from the Walt Disney movie “Chicken Little” (Nina transcript, 1.42). [“Chicken Little” tries to help people by telling them the sky is falling. He is picked on, ostracised and ignored. People do not recognize that they can trust him]. Nina chose him because “he is small and cute” (Nina transcript, 1.55). She may have identified with this character because of her own lived experiences but I have never observed anything to indicate that Nina has been picked on in school. I regard her as a very quiet, earnest little girl who perhaps ostracises or distances herself from others as she completely focuses and makes a tremendous effort to complete work to the best of her ability. Often, she is slow to complete her story writing because of her meticulous attitude and she could feel her efforts are ignored and not acknowledged in the classroom.

Anna, a 10 year-old, also chose a cartoon character. She nominated a television cartoon character called “Kim Possible” (Anna transcript, 1.33). She placed this teen-aged crime-fighter figure, who tackles worldwide, family and school issues, in the ‘look up to a lot’ area of her field map making her less significant than her mother but more than her house captain (Anna transcript, 1.96). Anna specified the reason for nominating this Kim Possible character was “She saves the world from villains” and “helps people” (Anna transcript, 1.37 & 40). She thought that ‘saving the world from villains’ was not a realistic objective for herself (Anna transcript, 1.47).

Celia, a 5 year-old, chose an intriguing character, a scientist-teacher with magical powers from a television programme called “Wicked Science” in which two teenagers get hit by a unique magnetic pulse which suddenly turns them into scientific geniuses (Celia transcript, l.43-55). Celia was impressed by him because he was good at science and could make plants grow but “not with sun, water or soil” (Celia transcript, l. 63; 66; 68).

The last in the series of “Harry Potter” books (Rowling, 2007) had recently been released so it was of no surprise that both the video and book featured in the choices of the children. “Harry Potter” was named as a video character who portrayed excitement “because he kills Voldemort (Molly transcript, l.34; 38). When I asked Molly if she felt she could do the same as “Harry Potter”, she laughed, and said, “I’d like to” (Molly transcript, l.43). Emma Watson, who played the character “Hermione Granger” in the video was chosen by Lucy, a 9 year-old and was nominated because of her acting ability. Lucy thought that the actress was very good at expressing her feeling and was very funny (Lucy transcript, l. 46-47; 49).

The two of 7 year-olds, who were perhaps more sophisticated and peer-group orientated, chose teenage-singer-dancer television characters. Gina’s television character, was a teenage actor-singer-songwriter called “Hannah Montana” from the television show of the same name [“Hannah Montana” is the story of a teenager who leads a normal school life during the day but turns into a successful singer by night]. She was identified by Gina for the “really good words” (Gina transcript, l. 66-67) she used in her song: “You can’t boss me around, I can be whoever I want to be” (Gina transcript, l. 67-68). These words obviously had relevance for Gina and I wondered if

that was what she would have liked to have said to some of the people in her peer group or adults in her family or school situation. When I asked her if she felt she could achieve as “Hannah” had, her reply was “probably” (Gina transcript, l. 45), “...I do want to be a singer so probably yes” (Gina, transcript l. 73). The choice ties in with her love of singing and her playground activities where she is seen organizing singing and dancing shows. She is usually ‘centre stage’, ‘performing’ for her group. These activities give her the opportunity to gain positive attention and feedback.

The trait of kindness was mentioned when Lorna, another 7 year-old, chose a character, “Vanessa Montez”, out the movie ‘High School Musical’ (Lorna transcript, l.38, 40 & 42) [“High School Musical is an American award-winning television series about teenagers at a high school who resist peer pressure and rivalry to inspire others]. Lorna was slightly confused by the name of her character. First of all, she named her correctly as ‘Gabriella Montez’ then changed it to ‘Vanessa Montez’ as she must have heard that the actress playing the role is Vanessa Hudgens]. I feel Lorna valued “Vanessa Montez” because of her kind personality and she would like to be seen doing similar activities. However, she only placed her in the ‘look up to’ segment of her field map (Lorna transcript, l.101 & 107) and I wondered why she did not credit her with more importance. Both Gina and Lorna gave me the impression that these characters had personal relevance for them in issues of group membership and problem-solving. Watching fictional characters solve problems may give the observer a safe, non-threatening and empathetic framework in which to learn emotional and social development.

The older girls chose people from television dramas, variety shows or sporting events. Pippa named an American actress, “Rachel Bilson”, who plays a leading character in

a television programme called “OC”, [‘The O.C.’ is a television series set in Orange County, California. The show focuses on the life of a troubled teenager from a broken home who is adopted by a wealthy and philanthropic family. The boy and his surrogate brother have to deal with life as outsiders in the sophisticated world of Orange County. “Rachel Bilson” plays the role of one of his teenaged girl friends, ‘Summer Roberts’]. When Pippa chose Rachel I suspected that she was talking about the character, as she chose her because she “stands up for what she believes in and after a few years of coming around, she’s good at it” (Pippa transcript, 1.83-84). I wondered if Pippa had faced similar social problems fitting in to a new school and admired the people she had named because of their success under such difficulties. When I asked Pippa if she thought she could do the same as her nominated people she sounded a little unsure and answered “not quite in the same sense but yes” (Pippa transcript, 1.86), and “it depends on the situation I was in, I guess” (Pippa transcript, 1.101).

When I first asked Emma if there was anyone she looked up to in the area of television or the movies, she expressed the opinion that there was really not much point in looking up to television or movie characters because “they’re all sort of fake, not real” (Emma transcript, 1. 31) and went on to say “it’s just the programme [“Home and Away”] that I like. There’s no point in actually liking anyone. It’s how the writers have actually made them” (Emma transcript, 1. 36-37). It seemed that Emma appreciated the story-line of the programmes she watched but had the maturity to make discriminatory judgements and regarded the characters, with a degree of scepticism, as shallow and not worth looking up to. Later in the interview, she chose Jason Gunn, a television show-host and presenter (Emma transcript, 1. 64). When she was weighing up if she could achieve in a similar manner to Jason Gunn, she

commented “probably not. I’d be more... I don’t think I would be fully committed to my work and family equally. It would have to be one or the other (Emma transcript, 1.72-73). I guessed the stability and fragility of family life is very important to her, as Emma commended Jason Gunn for his ability to create a successful career and also maintain his family life (Emma transcript, 1.69-70). Emma’s comments about the falseness of characters in television dramas shows that she is not taken in by popular television images that provide fantasy level solutions to pressing social problems. Sarah’s chosen person from television was well-grounded in reality. She chose the captain of the national netball team, Adine Wilson (Sarah transcript, 1.55-57). She obviously admired this netballer tremendously for her skill following her matches regularly on television and she put her in the ‘look up to totally’ position (Sarah transcript, 1.64, 66 & 117). These older girls articulated reasons that were personally relevant to them and reflected an ability to look at the personal strengths of their characters.

Bridie, a 10 year-old, was the only girl to choose a magazine person as someone she looked up to. She chose a real-life Olympic rider from her “Horse and Rider” magazine (Bridie transcript, 1.41-42) and placed her in the ‘look up to totally’ category (Sophie B transcript, 1.124). Bridie was a keen rider and like Sarah, aspired to role of a competitive sports woman. No one chose a person from a magazine specifically targeted at the ‘teen’ audience.

Television is part of our everyday lives and usually takes place within the private cultural space of home. Television watching hours during school term time for the girls may be limited because of the time spent involved in homework and sport, but it

may be a form of relaxation when they come home from school and are tired. In this state, they may be more vulnerable to the possibility of what television portrays. Its images may come to seem more real than an individual's own experiences. Whether we choose to opt in or out of the fantasy world is an individual choice. Emma was making it clear that she was not taken in by the 'fakeness' of it all.

Who did the girls look up to in books?

The latest "Harry Potter" book (Rowling, 2007) had recently been released so I was not surprised to find that it featured in a quarter of the chosen books by the girls.

"Harry Potter" and "Hermione Grainger" had obviously captured the imagination of the girls. For the youngest girls, these two characters were placed in the 'look up to a lot' or 'look up to a bit' segment for their ability to kill the evil "Voldemort" or their skill in flying (Alice transcript, 1.151; Molly transcript, 1.84). One of the 7 year-olds put "Harry Potter" into the 'look up to totally' segment because he was a wizard. He was also nominated and valued 'totally' because "he's good at making hard decisions" (Lucy transcript, 1.61). "Hermione" was also mentioned in the 'look up to a lot' category because she was "she's good at school and [...] she's [...] knows everything" (Anna transcript, 1.58). This book and the rest of the series had captured the imagination of the girls across the age range but their identification with the characters changed from fascination with the magical powers that they possessed to acknowledging their personal attributes.

One of the 5 years-olds chose differently. Celia chose a book character "Sally" from a school reading book, "Sally and the Sparrows" (Giles, 1996) whom she indicated that she 'totally looked up to' (Celia transcript, 1. 77; 142). It was Sally's "golden brown

hair” (Celia transcript, l. 84) and her care of animals, “...she fed the sparrows. That’s pretty nice” (Celia transcript, l.86-87), that Celia ‘looked up to’. She considered it possible that she might be able to do the things that “Sally” did and she drew a parallel with an event in her own life to illustrate how, “...because I’ve been feeding the ducks before. It’s a bit like feeding the sparrows”, (Celia transcript, l. 93-94). It may have been that because Celia had experienced lived events and knew that it was a realistic achievement, and that “Sally” also had similar physical features to herself that she rated Sally so highly on the field-map.

Two of the 7 year-old girls chose two more traditional stories. One nominated “Milly Molly Mandy” for her guileless nature:

she doesn’t ask for things, she just, erm, she just earns them. She doesn’t say when I get, when I do something good I get a treat she just does something then she gets what she is probably hoping for (Gina transcript, l.85-87).

It appeared that Gina had chosen her nominated book character, “Milly Molly Mandy”, the central figure out of the “Milly Molly Mandy” series (Lankester Brisley, 1960) because she showed desirable traits: When I asked her if she ‘looked up to “Milly Molly Mandy” because she did not expect rewards, she replied “She gets them but she doesn’t expect them” (Gina transcript, l. 90) and contrasted it with her own actions: “At the moment, I am a bit...I do sometimes say...when I’m good,...but I try not to ‘cause at the moment I am earning money to go to somewhere special next holidays. When I’m good I get ...err (Gina transcript, l. 93-95). It sounded as though this may have been an issue she had been experiencing at home. I was surprised that Gina had chosen such a traditional story in comparison to her choice of television character. “Milly Molly Mandy” lived in a cottage in rural England with her extended family. She wore very prim clothes, played with her childhood friends and went to the

village shop for her mother. Her mischief was minor. In contrast with Gina's teen-age television character, "Hannah Montana", whose life seemed to full of excitement, "Milly Molly Mandy's" life was painted in predictable, moralistic terms.

Nina, another 7 year-old, chose "Laura Ingalls Wilder", the author-character from the story, "Little House on the Prairie" (Nina transcript, l.68). ["Little House on the Prairie" is a children's book written by Laura Ingalls Wilder and first published in 1935. The author is the central character telling the story of the exploits of a family settling in the American West in the 19th century]. Although Nina could not explain why she looked up to her character, she stated that she just liked her a lot (Nina transcript, l.74-76). I wondered if she was using the meaning of 'look up to' as 'like' and the people she was nominating were people she 'liked'. Nina placed the author of "Little House on the Prairie" in the 'look up to a bit' category (Nina transcript, l.140 & 143). Nina is an avid reader and story writer choosing to do both activities in her spare moments, so I guessed that this was something she would like to do. The incidents retold by the author probably captivated her imagination because they were vivid and amusing but they also took place within a large family setting similar to her own. "Laura" is portrayed in the book as a six-seven year-old who helps her mother when everyone is ill. In view of Nina's love of creative writing and her earlier comments about her brother and how she tries to help him, it could be that Nina sees herself in a similar role within her family. Both Gina and Nina had personal empathy with their chosen characters and placed them either in the 'look up to a lot' or 'look up to a little' category.

Bridie picked a school-girl fictional book character from one of the “Pony Pals” series (Betancourt, 1994-2003), who was a really good horse rider, as someone she looked up to (Bridie transcript l. 70 & 128). However, she felt that could not achieve riding skills like this character (Bridie transcript, l. 97). I wondered why there was such a discrepancy in the way she regarded her real-life and the fictional horse riders when they seemed to possess similar attributes. When I asked her about this, she did not offer any explanation (Bridie transcript, l.98).

The oldest group of girls were more varied in their selection of book characters to look up to. Sarah chose a fictional book character in an atypical field. She chose a female spy, “Alex Rider” from a book called “Stormbreaker” (Sarah transcript, l.84 & 89) because she liked the idea of “how they [spies] get to go on adventures” (Sarah transcript, l.89). [“Stormbreaker” is a book written by A. Horowitz (2000) about a teenage spy who worked for the British Secret Service]. Sarah laughingly said this was something she could achieve (Sarah transcript, l. 92) and placed this character in the least important ‘look up to’ position on her field map with her mother.

Despite Emma’s scepticism about the hollowness of television and video characters, she was willing to choose a fictional book character whom she looked up to from the area of books. The character she had chosen was a girl from a story called “My Sister’s Keeper” (Picoult, 2004) and this was the only peer-aged person she nominated during her interview. This story presented a dilemma which appeared to have forced her to think deeply about the implications for a family when one member was experiencing a life-threatening illness. This character had obviously made an impression on her as she was placed into the ‘look up to totally’ position (Emma transcript, l.97). Emma thoughtfully elaborated on what it was she admired about the

girl: “she’s put her life on the line for her sister so many times because her sister was born with kidney failure and so she is continually giving blood and giving organs” (Emma transcript, 1.48-50). It appeared that she had considered the situation and, perhaps in the light of actually having a younger sibling herself, could visualize the dilemma faced by the family. She felt that it would be difficult to make the same sacrifice as her nominated book character had done and commented “I don’t think that I would find it very fair” (Emma transcript, 1.57).

A theme of personal strength seemed to shine through when Pippa nominated her book character. The book character she chose was her only peer-aged person: “there’s one called Rusty in a book called “Back Home” (Pippa transcript, 1.94). [The story is called “Rusty’s Back Home” by Michelle Magorian, and was first published in 1984. The story is about a 12 year old girl who returns to England after the war in 1945 after spending five years in USA. It follows the trials she has to endure to fit back into English life including being teased for her American accent]. Pippa named her because she “doesn’t get put down by what other people think of her” (Pippa transcript, 1.98-99). I wondered if this story held a real-life parallel for Pippa as she had moved to our school and probably had to adjust to a new environment. It also had a similarity to the television character she had chosen who found fitting into a new school environment difficult.

At the time of interviewing the girls, the latest “Harry Potter” novel had just been released. “Harry Potter” and “Hermione Granger” were to the fore in people chosen from the world of books. I wondered if these book characters would have received such significant placing if they had not received so much publicity. Most of the girls

put their book characters into the 'look up to a little' segment of their field map. The three characters who were accorded the most significant classification, seemed to have personal empathetic importance for the girls.

Who were the significant other people chosen by the girls?

The girls had the opportunity to name anyone that they felt was significant to them that had not previously been included. It was noticeable that the girls did not need thinking time to consider this. Their responses came rapidly as though they had been anxious to include the nominated person as someone they looked up to. Many of them went on to name additional family members: older cousins (Bridie transcript, l.81; Lorna transcript, l.67), an older brother (Celia transcript, l.100), a family friend who was like family (Nina transcript, l.93) and the family dog (Molly transcript, l.51). A 7 year-old nominated me (Gina transcript, l.100). One of the 5 year-olds named the gardener:

Probably our gardener as I like to garden, grow stuff because I have a big garden and I'm planting a great, lots of lovely stuff like watermelon, grapes and apples and oranges and lots of stuff (Alice transcript, l.70; 71-72).

One of the oldest girls chose a New Zealand fashion designer, "Trelise Cooper or another similar design person because when I am older I want to be in that sort of line of art and fashion" (Pippa transcript, l. 56; 59-60).

Two-thirds of the girls put these 'significant others' into the totally look up to segment of their field maps. I wondered if the gardener, the friend of mother's and the older cousins were semi-replacement stand-in mother figures for the girls as their own

mothers were busy and these people were nominated because they gave valuable one-to-one attention to the girls.

Which of the peer generated icons were recognized and looked up to by the girls?

The peer-generated icons enabled me to collect data about who the girls recognized and regarded as worth looking up to from a specific set of popular figures, while their placement on the field map gave me a picture of how the girls rated the personalities in comparison to people in their personal sphere. The photographs used for the task were prepared by a class of Year 8 girls at a school in a similar socio-economic environment to the participants. As part of their Social Studies programme, the Year 8 girls were asked to identify the 12 most important figures, whom they considered young girls would look up to, and to present them on a set of cards. The teaching colleague who undertook this process found the girls conducted an interesting and rigorous debate over several weeks as they short-listed the candidates. I suspected the choice of the icons was influenced by the amount of media exposure some of the personalities had recently received. If the task had been tackled at another point in time the final selection may have been significantly different.

First of all, the girls were asked how many of the peer-generated icons they recognized. As seen in Table 1, it was striking how few icons were recognized and again, how judiciously the girls cut out the ones that did not interest them. The 10-12 year-old girls were able to recognize over half the photographs but two of the younger girls were unable to recognize any. The fact that the icons had been prepared by Year 8 girls could have had an influence on the number recognized as some of the icons were more appropriate to the interests of older girls. For example, the author,

Jacqueline Wilson, writes stories which appeal to the 9-12 year-old age range. However, apart from Bridie who recognized six of the icons and chose all six as persons she felt she looked up to, the rest of the girls showed that they could be quite discerning and, generally, only identified half of their recognized icons as worth looking up to any degree. Again, apart from Bridie, the girls demonstrated that few of these popular figures were someone that they considered they looked up to totally.

Table 1

Number of peer-generated icons recognized and chosen as worthy of looking up to by each girl

Age of girl	Number recognized	Number chosen	Number looked up to totally
5	2	2	1
5	5	2	1
6	4	2	1
7	3	2	1
7	4	2	1
7	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	6	6	4
10	6	3	1
11	7	3	1
12	11	5	3
12	10	2	0

As seen in Table 2, Steve Irwin, the recently deceased Australian animal adventurer and television personality, was the most frequently recognized person. A quarter of the girls claimed that they looked up to him totally. Most of the girls who had nominated him cited him for his skill in handling dangerous animals as Nina explained, “if he was showing children a crocodile, he would not leave its mouth open. I could trust him”, (Nina transcript, 1.181-182). However, Emma’s admiration and opinion of Steve Irwin was that “he’s touched heaps of children’s lives. My little

brother really, really likes him. He looks up to him so much,” (Emma transcript, 1.133-134).

Richie McCaw, a New Zealand rugby player, who had captained the “All Blacks” on numerous occasions and was a player with the local “Super 14” team the “Crusaders”, was almost as well known and as well regarded as Steve Irwin. As a local sporting ‘hero’, he had a high profile in the media and was personally known to some of the girls. All the girls who looked up to him mentioned his sporting skill.

Table 2

Number of times the peer-generated icons were recognized and regarded as worthy of being looking up to by the girls

Personalities	Number of times recognized	Number of times chosen	Number of times totally looked up to
Steve Irwin	10	7	3
Richie McCaw	9	5	2
The Queen	7	4	3
The Prime Minister	7	3	2
Jacqueline Wilson	5	4	1
Oprah Winfrey	5	2	1
God/Jesus	4	2	2
Brooke Fraser	3	1	0
Princess Diana	3	1	0
Reese Witherspoon	3	0	0
Kylie Minogue	1	0	0
Sarah Ulmer	0	0	0

The Queen and the Prime Minister were equally as recognized and almost as well regarded, however, the girls had a variety of reasons for nominating them. Celia, one of the youngest girls, placed the Queen in the ‘look up to totally’ position because “She looks like my Auntie” (Celia transcript, 1.184), whereas Emma, one of the oldest participants praised the Queen for her perseverance and consistency: “The fact that

she has consistent power over everyone, she still manages to look, act orderly all the time” (Emma transcript, l.146-147). Alice chose the Queen because she was English like the Queen (Alice transcript, l.194) and she liked her smile (Alice transcript, l.197). The Prime Minister also had a smile and a fringe (Alice transcript, l.202). She credited the Queen with more importance than the Prime Minister placing the first one in the ‘totally’ position and the latter in the ‘look up to a lot’ segment of her map (Alice transcript, l.214;215). Gina named the Prime Minister because:

“Well, just like you she never tells lies. I think you and the Prime Minister are just like the same, you’re both like, you’re the Head of the School and she’s the head of the country. It’s kind of the same” (Gina transcript, l.170-172).

Perseverance against the odds seemed to be something Bridie admired about the Prime Minister when she commented “she stays calm when the country starts not liking her” (Bridie transcript, l. 176).

Oprah Winfrey was nominated because Gina thought she was a singer and a good example (Gina transcript, l.178; 180-182), although she was not quite sure who she was, “I think she is a singer, I can’t quite remember” (Gina transcript l. 178), then she muttered under her breath, “I don’t know. I look up to a lot of people but I don’t really know why I do. I just really love the person who is a good example”, (Gina transcript, l. 180-181). I further questioned Gina and asked her why she thought Oprah Winfrey was a good example, and she mentioned the singing again (Gina transcript, l. 184) but also added an element of physical attraction “...I like her ear-rings!” (Gina transcript, l. 189). Emma placed Oprah in the ‘look up to totally’ segment of her field map because “she has done so much with her life” (Emma transcript, l.127-128). I wondered if it was as a result of frequent media exposure that Gina and Emma thought Oprah was worthy of being looked up to.

The religious icon representing God or Jesus was recognized by fewer children than Oprah Winfrey. Gina said “who on earth is that?” [pointing to card 1 – God/Jesus] (Gina transcript, l. 161-162). Any cultural representation of a religious figure would be fraught with interpretive challenges but the photograph used for this icon was a copy of 19th century painting entitled “The Light of the World” by William Holman Hunt. It is a traditional depiction representing Jesus holding a lantern and knocking at a door. Nina and Bridie placed the icon in their ‘look up to totally’ segments of the field map. Nina described the picture as “someone holy” but did not “know quite how to explain” (Nina transcript, l.188 & 190), whereas Bridie showed a little more awareness: “He gave up his life for others” (Bridie transcript, l. 171).

It was interesting that the set of peer-generated icons contained few of the media ‘pop princesses’ such as popular singers and actresses, who frequently feature in the newspapers and magazine targeting teenagers and women. Paris Hilton, Brittany Spears and their contemporaries had not been picked by the Year 8 girls who prepared the material as worthy of being looked up to by girls. The set did include Reese Witherspoon, an award-winning American actress who plays in movies aimed at the teen-aged audience but none of the girls were impressed by her, or Kylie Minogue, an enduring singer well-known for her raunchy dance routines. The New Zealand singer, Brooke Fraser, a popular and successful young singer songwriter who expresses her strong Christian beliefs in her songs and during 2007 was the public face of World Vision in New Zealand was recognized by three girls. Her Fijian background may have contributed to her identification by Anna as someone she could that she looked up to. Anna comes from a highly supportive Māori family. She cited Brooke Fraser’s

good singing as the reason for her placement (Anna transcript, l.120) and I also wondered if Anna admired the singer's confidence to perform. None of the girls recognized Sarah Ulmer, a New Zealand Olympic and Commonwealth gold medallist in cycling. Despite retiring from competitive sport in 2007, she still features in television and magazine advertising. Recognizing a person wearing a cycling helmet may have been difficult.

The girls appeared to nominate the peer-generated icons for traits outside teen idolization. Their comments were discerning and they were able to place the peer-generated icons by comparing them to their personally nominated people.

Who were the most likely to be 'totally looked up to?'

Family members and 'significant others' were greatly valued, 75% of them being placed in the 'look up to totally' segment of the field maps as seen in Table 3. School nominees were not as highly valued as family members, few of them being placed in the most significant position. However, 62% were given the 'look up to a lot' status. Television, video or magazine characters were generally viewed as not worthy of 'look up to totally' status and were placed equally in the 'look up to a lot' and 'look up to a little' segment of the field maps. Perhaps the sentiments voiced by Emma, "they're all sort of fake, not real" (Emma transcript, l. 31), "there's no point in actually liking anyone. It's how the writers have actually made them" (Emma transcript, l. 36-37), were demonstrated by other girls in their placement of these individuals.

More book characters than television ones were regarded as highly significant, probably because the girls could empathize with them. A personal connection had been made. This was true in the case of Celia's choice of "Sally" from a school reading book. Celia actually said 'she's got golden brown hair' and "because I've been feeding the ducks before. It's a bit like feeding the sparrows" (Celia transcript, l. 84; 93-94). She made had made a personal connect with "Sally" on two counts. The two oldest girls, Emma and Millie also chose books with which they could personally identify and, like Celia, put their characters into the 'look up to totally' segment.

Table 3
Percentage placement in each segment of the field map

Cultural category	looked up to totally	looked up to a lot	looked up to a bit
Family members	76	18	6
School members	15	62	23
Television/videos/magazines	17	42	41
Book characters	27	27	46
Significant others	75	12	13
Peer-generated icons	48	34	18

The most frequently chosen peer-generated icons were public figures who the girls felt deserved recognition for their outstanding attributes, they were not 'just pretty faces' and they gave them credit for this. After the family and personally significant others, this group was regarded by the girls as being the next most important. I felt these were the heroes who inspired from afar. As Maxine Singer, the President of the Carnegie Institution of Washington (1991) wrote in her editorial entitled "Heroines and Role Models":

Role models will be for naught if there are no heroines and heroes from whom to learn about courage, about noble purpose, about how to reach within and beyond ourselves to find greatness (Science, July 19, 1991, p. 249).

Did the girls choose adults or peers as role models?

It was noticeable that the youngest girls and the 9-10 year-olds named an equal number of adults to peers in their choices. The 7 year-olds, however, leaned more heavily towards their peers as their focus, two-thirds of their nominated people being peer aged, whereas the oldest girls were the opposite and were looking towards three-quarters of their nominated people being adults. All the girls placed more significance on their adult figures in the 'look up to totally' section. There were twice as many adults in this section than peer-aged people. The reverse was true for the second less important category of 'look up to a lot' and in the least significant region of 'look up to a little' the ratio of adults to peers was almost equal. From this, I suspected that adults during the primary school years still hold the most significance for girls and that although during the 7-8 year old age group, peer relationships have a strong influence, by the age of 11-12 the girls are able to reflect on and value the personal strengths of their adult figures.

Do girls choose male or female role models?

The girls chose twice the number of females in comparison to males in their personal section of the field map. I noticed that a lesser number of males were nominated as the age of the children increased. The youngest girls chose seven males, whereas the 7 year-olds chose five. The 9-10 year-olds chose three males, and the 11-12 year-old girls nominated only two. Three of the girls chose no male figures for their personally nominated people. I wondered if the older girls selected fewer males because of attending an all-girls department of the school.

The male figures chosen by the girls had been a father, two grandfathers, two older brothers, an older male cousin, teachers, a gardener, Harry Potter, Jason Gunn – television presenter and several male cartoon characters. “Harry Potter” was definitely responsible for boosting the number of males nominated. No male school friends were nominated although the little girls interact with the boys frequently during their early years and the older girls have plenty of opportunities for interaction during shared activities with the boys’ department.

The females chosen by the girls were mothers, a family friend, an older cousin, teachers, friends, peer-group leaders, sports women, book and television characters and a fashion designer. These could all be regarded as women carrying out traditional female roles. Adult females were seen in a ratio of 11:3 to peer-aged females in the ‘look up to totally’ segment of the field map. This changed in the ‘look up to a lot’ section to 5:8 in favour of the peer-aged females.

Why the girls chose their nominated people?

The person’s skills were the most common reason for being chosen. The girls were twice as likely to mention a skill rather than an aspect of nurturing which was the other main reason. The youngest children and the 9-10 year-olds mentioned the skills that the person demonstrated or the nurturing role that person played.

She’s really nice to me sometimes (Celia transcript, 1.15).

She’s nice because I once had a story about Sally and she fed the sparrows. That’s pretty nice (Celia transcript, 1.86-87).

His cuddles that he gives me (Celia transcript, 1.108).

Probably our gardener as I like to garden, grow stuff...
Yes, because I have a big garden and I'm planting a great, lots of lovely stuff like watermelon, grapes and apples and oranges and lots of stuff (Alice transcript, 1.70-73).

The 7 year-olds, however, looked more towards their person's ability to solve difficult social situations and the skills they mentioned related to corresponding social interactions. Gina exemplified this in the reasons she gave for her nominated people:

I have fights with people and when she hits other people she just walks away she doesn't have a big argument and some people do boss me around so I try to be like her and just walk away (Gina transcript, 1.41-43).

She also writes a lot of songs which she, umm, they just have really good words, err, there's a song that says, "You can't boss me around, I can be whoever I want to be". So...(Gina transcript, 1.66-68).

Well, she doesn't ask for things, she just, erm, she just earns them. She doesn't say when I get, when I do something good I get a treat she just does something then she gets what she is probably hoping for (Gina transcript, 1.85-87).

At the moment, I am a bit...I do sometimes say...when I'm good,.. but I try not to cos at the moment I am earning some money to go to somewhere special next holidays. When I'm good I get...err (Gina transcript, 1.93-95).

The oldest group of girls had a tendency to look at and reflect on a longer-term timeframe and mentioned personal strengths, life experiences and survival strategies rather than simple skills:

My Dad because he had quite a good job and erm, he was quite clever and took all the roles in a play and stuff, and the main part roles and then My Mum was a really good hockey player. She got into the zones...(Sarah transcript, 1.13-16)

The fact, like, where she was before I was born, like going from being a poor family and not being able to afford decent meals all the time to being the owner of a successful business (Emma transcript, 1.14-16).

She's put her life on the line for her sister so many times because her sister was born with kidney failure and so she is continually giving blood and giving organs (Emma transcript, 1.48-50).

He's just really successful in what he has done and he's still managed to raise a family (Emma transcript, 1.69-70).

Did the girls think they could do what their nominated people had done?

The older the girls, the less likely they were to think that they could achieve what their chosen people had done. The youngest girls were the most positive looking and were confident that they could achieve feats similar to their parents, teachers, book and cartoon characters. The 7 year-old girls recorded only three times as many 'yes' replies as 'no' in comparison to the younger ones who were nine times more likely to say they could accomplish the achievements of their chosen people. The oldest girls were more circumspect and, although they answered negatively, they qualified their answer by saying perhaps they could achieve similar results in a different field.

I noticed, as seen in Table 4, that the girls were more likely to feel they could achieve what the people they had placed in the most significant 'look up to totally' position had done rather than in more distant parts of their field map.

Table 4
Girls' perception of their likelihood of achieving the same their 'totally looked up to' people

Cultural category	% regarded as 'totally looked up to'	% regarded as achievable
Family members	71	53
School members	8	50
Television/videos/magazines	17	67
Book characters	27	36
Significant others	75	75
Peer-generated icons	49	28

There were three times as many ‘yes’ replies than ‘no’ in this first segment whereas in the two more distant sections the replies were more evenly balanced. When I asked the girls if they felt they could achieve what their personally identified people had achieved, they replied in more positive terms about the people they had identified from their families or from their ‘significant other’ group. I was surprised that so many of the girls also thought that they could achieve similarly to their chosen television, video or magazine characters. Alice rationalized that she could achieve the same as SpongeBob “because I like to swim” (Alice transcript, l. 85). Several of the girls considered the question rather comic. When I asked Molly if she could achieve the same as “Harry Potter”, she answered “I’d like to” [laughing] (Molly transcript, l. 43). The girls had identified their chosen person because of skills they practised and enjoyed themselves, and seemed to view the similar level of achievement as attainable. I suspected that the girls were focussing on the skills and they considered that achievable. The actual character was secondary. Emma was right about their ‘hollowness’ when she described television and video as “they’re all sort of fake, not real” (Emma transcript, l.31). She and another of the older girls had chosen ‘real-life’ personalities as “there’s no point in actually liking anyone. It’s how the writers have actually made them” (Emma transcript, l. 36-37).

I suspected that when the girls chose people they looked up to from the peer-generated photographs, they were using slightly different criteria and were probably choosing people they admired. When I asked them if they thought they could achieve what the person had done, it frequently induced a laugh. There were 15 negative replies compared to 8 positive ones and 6 indecisive replies. Someone of the girls qualified their replies, ‘probably not in the same way but...’

What issues were raised through the interviews?

I had the feeling that the youngest of the girls were keen to nominate people that had personal relevance for them and were part of their lived experiences. Celia looked up to a girl in her reading book: “she’s nice because I once had a story about Sally and she fed the sparrows. That’s pretty nice” (Celia transcript, 1.86-76); and commenting on her teacher’s good artwork she said: “I make pretty good artwork ‘cause yesterday night I was cutting out penguins and a whale and today I put it on a display ‘cause we’re studying about Antarctica” (Celia transcript, 1.28-30). These youngest girls appeared to be working through issues of socialization, social identity, social comparison and categorizing in line with social cognitive theory.

Two of the 7 year-olds had been experiencing peer conflict in the playground, and many of their answers seemed to allude to the issues of social identity, comparison, categorization, group membership, and problem-solving. The third, Nina, was less mature and less confident and her replies lacked conviction but she appeared to want to be part of the group. In nominating a classmate who was not in her social group, Nina commented:

She can be very kind sometimes even though [...] she’s very kind, I don’t normally play with her too much. She looks very nice, and she acts very nice and she hardly does any mean stuff – so, yeah.
(Nina transcript, 1.35-37).

I felt the 9 and 10 year-old girls were looking for strong female role models particularly in the school area where they had chosen older girls who had reached important positions within the school. The 9-10 year-olds were concerned with social consciousness and social comparison and compared themselves to their nominated people:

She's good at school and [...] she's [...] knows everything (Anna transcript, 1.58).

Because she is kind and helpful, and she knows what she is doing (Anna transcript, 1.66).

I don't think I am very good at making decisions (Lucy transcript, 1.64).

There were themes of social comparison and consciousness coming through.

I considered that the oldest girls were far more reflective in their thinking than the younger ones about the people they looked up to. They tended to take the long-term view when considering their nominated people and what they had achieved. Emma, in particular, gave her reasons in thoughtful tones citing persistence, consistency, importance to children and upward mobility as part of her reasoning. I enjoyed listening to these girls so much as they tended to have the ability to look at the long-term nature of lived experiences and struggles and recognized the personal strengths of their nominated people. They touched on areas of social mobility, social status, competitiveness, social consciousness, and belonging to a group. It was refreshing to see that by 11-12 years-of-age the girls were developing the ability to reason, look at the realities of relationships and consider the long-term picture. They expressed their willingness to value people that they looked up to for their ability to overcome life's challenges. Group membership was also something that concerned them and strong female roles were also a feature at this stage.

Summary

This study undertaken with a small group of girls at one point in their school life gave some indication that family, particularly mothers, and 'significant others' who spend

time with the girls, either listening to them or sharing a skill with them fill a significant role modelling for young girls. The field maps of the girls showed that their nominated family members and the people they had chosen as 'significant others' were more important than school identities. It also seemed the girls realized that book and media personalities had a certain degree of unreality about them and therefore they were not given the same kudos as family members to whom they had close proximity. The group that appeared less dependent on family members and more in the milieu of peer-pressure groups and teenaged media drama princesses were the 7 year-old girls. I wondered if my findings were symptomatic of this group of girls or if they were an indication of the challenges that this age group face. For this small sample of young girls, it was heartening to see that family members are still very important to the girls and looking at the oldest girls, it seemed they were developing a reflective thoughtfulness about the long-term value of their parents.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

“Modelling is the one most pervasive and powerful means of transmitting values, attitudes, and patterns of thought and behaviour” (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p.686), but it is also complex. Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory builds on the early social learning approaches by addressing the fact that human development involves a complex interplay of many factors. It highlights the active role of the children in their observational learning as they can attend selectively to particular people in the environment (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). “When children can select the models with whom to associate, the selective association produces even greater differences in what is learned observationally” (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p.687). The significance of the person nominated may reflect the quality and extent of their interactions with the specific individual and present a role model worthy of imitation. I found the Social Cognitive theories of Bandura and associates (1977; 1989; 1991) helpful for understanding the complexity of the issues involved and the theoretical background on which to base my investigation into the girls’ perception of who they looked up to, why they chose their significant people, how important they were to them and if they thought they could achieve in a similar manner.

The research methodology of an interview and task format was designed to gain the child’s perspective about who they looked up to. The interview data obtained from a purposeful sample was plentiful and I attempted to analyze it rigorously through continually auditing and reorganizing the transcripts into meaningful units and by writing narratives to identify themes. My examination of the data led me to believe

that Bandura's (1977) claim that children largely learn through modelling, observing and imitating adults was clearly demonstrated but was indeed complex.

For the purposes of my research, I chose to regard a 'role model' as a significant person who can be looked up to in some aspect of his or her life, and is deemed worthy of respect, inspiration, admiration and/or emulation by another. Most girls were clear that their named person possessed certain attributes that were admirable, and that they could aspire to. Some girls used a narrow focus more applicable to that of a 'hero'.

Do girls look up to people they know or famous people?

Family members and 'significant others' were highly valued, 75% of them being placed in the 'look up to totally' segment of the field maps. This compared to 33% of the television or video and peer generated icons who were regarded as worth 'looking up to totally'. The most frequently cited family member was the girl's mother.

Mothers act as proximal role models sharing their beliefs and values and by modelling appropriate behaviours. If the girls were unable to form, or having difficulties forming a bond with their own parents, particularly their mother, I wondered if they were choosing a parent surrogate when they nominated their siblings. Like parents they provide an emotional bond, advice and assistance and may also act as role models. The girls who had not chosen parents, nominated brothers (Nina transcript, 1.10; Lorna transcript, 1.12), grandparents (Bridie transcript, 1.10; Gina transcript, 1.22), their older cousins (Lorna transcript, 1.67; Bridie transcript, 1.81) or even the mother's friend who was just like family (Nina transcript, 1.93). Bryant and Zimmerman (2003) reported that grandparents were the most likely group to be nominated if

adolescents were unable to name parents. The basis on which a person is selected as a 'significant other' is often vague and imprecise (Bell, 1970). Although the girls gave their reasons for nominating these people as to do with their nurturing attitude towards them or the skills that they shared, I suspected that it was quality of the time they spent together that was probably cherished.

Peer-generated icons were valued more than the characters on television and video, 48% of the peer-generated icons were placed in the 'look up to totally' segment of the field map in comparison to 17% of the television characters. The peer-generated icons most frequently chosen by the girls were Steve Irwin, the animal adventurer and television personality, Richie McCaw, a rugby player, the Queen, the Prime Minister and Jacqueline Wilson, an author of stories for girls. These could be regarded as conservative role models for any age group. Singers and actresses were generally disregarded. The list of characters who were named from television, videos or magazines were a mixture of cartoon characters, actresses, real-life sports women and a television presenter. Two of the 7 year-olds chose teen-aged singer/dancers whom they totally looked up to but no mention was made of physical attractiveness, or popularity as a reason for nomination. The girls cited skills or personality traits as reasons for their choices.

It has long been assumed in popular culture that role models, individuals who excel in a particular field, will encourage those around them to strive to achieve a similar degree of success
(Lockwood & Kunda, (1999, p.226).

The mass media acts as powerful transmitters and reinforcers of sociocultural ideas and aspirational role models are heightened when they are considered relevant (Dittmar, Halliwell, & Ive, 2006). Television provides a wide array of attractive models with whom to identify. Children's wishful identification with television

characters was studied by Hoffner (1996) who asked 155 children aged 7-12 to name their favourite characters and identify the traits that made them special. Hoffner found that girls were more likely to report a sense of intimate social relationship with a media character than boys.

Children choose to view certain shows regularly and develop deep attachments to the frequently viewed characters, which increases the likelihood they will be influenced by these images (Hoffner, 1996, p.398).

Gina, in particular, seemed to identify with and be vulnerable to 'girl power' culture associated with teenage media figures. She commented "I just think that some people on TV are really good examples" (Gina transcript, l.48). She nominated Hannah Montana, a character from a television programme called "High School Musical" that she watched on a weekly basis (Gina transcript, l.53; 64). This character really appealed to Gina because of her attitude and I suspected that it reflected the way she felt:

She also writes a lot of songs which she, umm, they just have really good words, err, there's a song that says, "You can't boss me around, I can be whoever I want to be". So... (Gina transcript, l.66-68).

These girls are characterized as autonomous, free and independent (Geissler, 2001) and often present "girlhood as a means of fostering female youth subculture" as a "deliberately sexually provocative" performance (Wald, 1998, p.586). Gina's performances in the playground suggest that she is internalizing these ideas. Her chosen role model appeared to have personal relevance for her and modelled achievements that she saw as attainable. Lockwood and Kunda (1997) found in their study that comparisons to a superstar who excelled in an area of interest or relevance could be self-enhancing and inspiring, if the star's achievements seem attainable.

“People use others to evaluate themselves” (Stapel & Koomen, 2000, p.1068). The most common consequence of social comparison processes is contrast. “It is assumed that superstars can lead to self-enhancement and inspiration under some circumstances and to self-deflation and demoralization under others (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997, p.91). I suspected that the girls in my sample had a mature grasp of what was achievable. The laugh they gave signalled that sometimes the question as to whether they could achieve in a similar manner was regarded as farcical. I suspected that in the case of the peer-generated icons, they used a slightly different definition of someone they ‘looked up to’ and were in fact nominating people they admired. In common with research conducted by Wohlford, Lochman and Barry (2004) into the choice of role models within a sample of college students, and Anderson and Cavallaro (2002), who carried out similar research with 179 children aged 8-13 years, my girls also rated their personally known role models as more significant than famous role models.

Do girls choose role models who are similar to themselves?

Role models are considered key players in the socialization process. One feature of role modelling is that children tend to choose role models with whom they can find some relevance and with whom they can compare themselves (Bandura, 1986; Lockwood & Kunda, 1999). When the model in question shares with the potential modeller some characteristics such as ethnicity, age, gender and/or social location, Bandura (1986) argued that the modeller is more likely to attempt to emulate the model. I looked how these characteristics were seen in my data.

Ethnicity

I had few examples of people from different cultures either in my sample of girls or in the people they chose, to be able to make any significant comment. Anna was the only girl of Māori descent whom I interviewed. I did wonder if she had chosen the singer, Brooke Fraser, because she felt some empathy with the singer's Fijian background but she cited singing ability as her reason for the choice and, as Anna is a choir member, I considered that was probably true. Oprah Winfrey, the African-American television presenter, had been chosen as someone to look up to by two of the girls. Gina thought she was probably a singer and liked her ear rings (Gina transcript, 1.178; 179), while Emma alluded to Oprah's ability to overcome the struggles of life: "Oprah's very inspirational, she's done so much with her life" (Emma transcript, 1.127-128). As Emma had made similar comments about her other chosen people, I think she admired people who overcame disadvantages in life whatever their ethnic background. There is no shortage of white characters for white children to identify with on television at the movies (Anderson & Cavallaro, 2002) and it was noticeable that all the television and video character chosen by my girls were white, except for the yellow sponge, "SpongeBob" and the other cartoon character, "Chicken Little". Further research with a more ethnically diverse group of participants could investigate the phenomena more successfully.

Age: Why are peers so important to 7 year olds?

In contrast to the other girls, the 7 year-olds nominated more peers than adults in their personally nominated section. Two thirds of the people they chose to look up to were peers. It is difficult to draw conclusions with such a small number of interviews but the girls at this age seemed to tackling social problem-solving issues with their peers.

“From around age 7, social comparisons assume a greater importance for children’s self-evaluation” and consequently their self-concept (Dittmar, Halliwell, & Ive, 2006, p.285). Same-age and same-sex groups provide a great influence with peer pressure at its height. Identification with a group entails taking on the group’s attitudes and interests. “Social comparisons within the group give children information about their own strengths and weaknesses” (Harris, 1995, p.467) and how they feel other people see them. The three 7 year-olds referred to common peers and appeared to be concerned about the image that they portrayed in comparison to these nominated friends. Both Gina and Lorna gave examples of how their friend dealt with difficult situations (Gina transcript, 1.41-43; Lorna transcript, 1.29-30; 32-33). According to Bussey and Bandura (1999) the peer group tends to reinforce and uphold parental values. I wondered if Gina and Lorna were choosing peers whom they thought epitomized the character traits that their parents and their teachers wanted them to display. For the rest of the girls age did not seem such a pertinent issue. The youngest girls and the 9 and 10 year-olds chose an equal number of peers as adults, whereas the older girls were more likely to choose adults. From this, I suspect that during the primary school years, adults still hold the most significance for girls.

Gender

The girls chose twice the number of females to males in their personal section of the field map and I noticed that the number of males nominated dropped as I looked towards the older girls. However, I felt that when the girls were giving their reasons for choosing their role models, gender was not part of the decision-making process.

The males who were chosen were named for their personal attributes or skills.

Research conducted by Bricheno and Thornton (2007) with children aged 10-11, and

14-16 years found that young people have a range of role models and particular reasons for choosing them. The majority identified loving, caring, friends and relatives from their direct environment as role models. “Gendered behaviors are a key marker of self-expression for many children” (Calvert, Mahler, Zehnder, Jerkins & Lee, 2003, p.628). They become especially salient as girls approach adolescence and they move from a world dominated by same-sex interactions to one that increasingly includes peers of the opposite sex (Calvert et al. 2003). I wondered if this contributed to the trend I noticed that the number of males nominated by the girls as someone they looked up to dropped as the age groups increased in age. The youngest group identified seven male role models. In fact, Molly chose her father rather than her mother (Molly transcript, 1.13). The 7 year-olds identified five males, the 9 and 10 year-olds three, and the eldest girls only two.

A great deal of gender-linked information is gained from models in one’s immediate environment such as parents, peers and significant people in social, educational and occupational contexts. Bussey and Bandura (1999.p.678) claimed that children ‘model their behaviour after same-sex models’ long before they have attained gender consistency. There is undoubtedly widespread modelling of gender stereotypes in the family and wider culture.

Schools, as societal institutions, present children with sets of social representations of gender in ways which distinguish the school from the family as an ecological context (Lloyd & Duveen, 1992, p.59).

In addition to teaching the children a system of gender-related values and practices, schools also serve to legitimize social representations of gender. There is an early appreciation for the social prescription that girls are the ones who are supposed to act ‘nice’ (Leaper, 1995). Celia, in her first year of school, commented that her mother

and the girl in her reading book that she looked up to were “nice” (Celia transcript, 1.15; 86). When talking about a science programme she liked on the television she talked about the teachers being ‘nice’ and actually chose a male one whom she looked up to (Celia transcript, 1.43), but she must have felt some conflict about this because she went on to comment “I wonder why all the teachers in this school are just ladies” (Celia transcript, 1.58). It sounded as though being 5 years-old could be a special period for gender learning for Celia. Girls see and learn cultural definitions of gender and science. Steinke (1998, p.143) said that three primary socializing agents contribute to the “masculine image of science”: home, school and the media. She stressed the need for girls to see women scientists in leadership roles.

“Gender development is a dynamic, interactive and socially situated process” (Martin, Ruble & Szkrybalo, 2004, p.703). On the basis of direct and vicarious experiences, children are inclined to pattern their behaviour after same-sex models rather than an opposite-sex model. The girls in my study nominated their female role models for nurturing, artistic, attractiveness and sporting skills in hockey and netball. These would be traditionally female traits. No one was named for being successful in an atypical field. Cross-sex modelling may occur for girls if, for example, a factor such as nurturance, which is more consistent with the female sex role stereotype, is shown. This was applicable for Bridie when she named an older cousin who was “really nice and really kind to me” (Bridie transcript, 1.86) and for Celia who chose her brother for “his cuddles that he gives me” (Celia transcript, 1.108).

Garrahy (2001) in an investigation of gender-differentiated schooling experiences for girls and boys, found by comparing teachers’ gender beliefs with what actually

happened in the classroom, that teachers did not take the children's gender into account when teaching. They took a position of "gender blindness" (Garrahy, 2001, p.92). Their attempt at fairness was similar to their attitude to colour or race blindness. They did not believe that gender was an issue in elementary school because of the age of the children whereas there were discrepancies in the way they interacted with girls and boys. Although no girl made any comment about the different opportunities presenting for girls and boys in school, I wondered how educational practices in our school contributed to gender development

What qualities about their role models do girls admire?

The girls most frequently identified the role model's skill in some particular skill as the reason for looking up to them. Nurturing characteristics of the models were the second most cited feature. These findings were the opposite to the findings of Anderson and Cavallaro (2002) in their study with children aged 8 to 13 years.

Every child has a unique and individual experience of his or her childhood. This research study was based on the children as active research participants. Research interviews with children can offer unrivalled information, particularly in combination with other evidence, to the researcher wishing to understand children's perceptions (Brooker, 2001, p.176; Dockett & Perry, 2007, p.48). I set out to conduct a study situated in a local context that would be accessible to other researchers and be open to a range of interpretations. In this way, I hoped that there would be comparability of the research as well as translatability and confirmability that would enable generalization to occur through understanding of the theoretical constructs, research methodology and results.

Limitations

Size of the sample

When conducting a qualitative study, the number of participants has to be restricted to a manageable number. The 12 girls participating in my study gave me the opportunity for a glimpse into their world but the findings can only be regarded as ‘potential’ signposts as to any more generalized issues. The claims towards significant findings can only be framed in terms of interesting pointers for more intensive investigation.

Context of the study

This study was conducted with a small group of girls from one urban school in a comfortable socio-economic setting. I wondered how my results would compare with those obtained from a different economic and cultural environment. The readings gave me an insight into a variety of socio-cultural settings and I was able to compare and contrast those finding with my own. I have no reason to believe that my study could not have transferability to other contexts.

Prepared materials

Peer-generated photographs were prepared by and were relevant to one specific group of girls. The girls who undertook the preparation of the cards were from a school in a similar socio-economic and cultural setting to my school and yet, the children were not able to identify most of the ‘peer-generated icons’. I wondered if the colleague who organized this process had worked with girls that represented the total age range of my sample, then would the icons have been different and more relevant. It would

also be interesting to investigate whether a significantly different group of role models would be identified by a class in a different socio-economic setting. The time factor also influenced the peer-generated photographs that were produced. Steve Irwin had recently died and therefore media interest had been high. At another point in time he would have not played such a significant role. When the girls talked about him they talked in the present tense. “He is” not “he was”. The photographs produced a glimpse of who was important to one specific group of girls at one specific point in time.

Definition parameters

For the purposes of this study, I selected a definition of a role model to be as simple as possible: a ‘role model’ is a significant person who, in some aspect of his or her life, is deemed worthy of respect, inspiration, admiration and/or emulation by another. All references to the labels of ‘role model’, ‘mentor’ or ‘hero’ were avoided in the interview situation. When conducting the interview sessions, the phrase ‘look up to’ was utilized. This phraseology was appropriate for the understanding of the age group of the girls interviewed in my study. Misunderstanding of the phrase ‘look up to’ may have caused confusion for some girls. At times, I wondered if they were using ‘look up to’ to mean ‘like’, ‘respect’, or ‘worthy of emulation’ and for some it seemed to mean ‘admire’. I expected that the girls would identify individuals they looked up to from a positive point of view. This expectation was never expressed so they would have the option to nominate whoever they felt as significant to them.

Limitations of the researcher

Avoiding suggestibility. Young children often produce very little information in response to open-ended probes, although it tends to be highly accurate in the

absence of suggestive questioning (Gilstrap, 2004). At the beginning of each interview, I made an effort to initiate a positive, trusting and comfortable atmosphere for the girls. I stressed that it was their opinions and ideas I valued and that there were no right or wrong answers. However, I noticed, when transcribing the audio-tapes, that there was frequent use of what could have been termed 'judgemental phrases' such as "Right", "All right", "Good girl" as well as laughter. These were not meant as reinforcement for a 'correct' answer but were made as an acknowledgement of the girls' contributions. However, it could have been construed by the girls as approval and evaluative praise. This could have affected the responses of some of the participants.

Comfort with the interview setting. Despite my long experience in teaching, my lack of experience of interviewing techniques was an issue. Most of the girls were very willing to talk but lack of expertise may have been the reason for two of the girls being very shy and reluctant to contribute. Even though they had agreed to be interviewed, it was obvious that they were embarrassed and did not enjoy the process. Embarrassment was obvious in the physical manifestations they displayed. Their obvious desire was to cut the process to as short as possible timeframe. Most girls were an absolute delight and keen to talk. Their trust was complete.

Ridged adherence to the interview protocol. I found sticking to the formal precise questions that I had on my card very difficult. When I was trying to read from the card, take notes, and manipulate the equipment, I found the interview process was formal, against my nature and normal relationship with the girls and not conducive to gaining qualitative data. When the girls failed at first to name a person from a specific area, I sometimes repeated the question and this may have affected their replies as

they may have felt pressured to choose someone. By strictly adhering to the scripted interview protocol, I sometimes asked follow-up questions that were inappropriate whereas, asking a more responsive question would have yielded more in-depth information. When the girls introduced interesting comments into their replies, I would have like to have the freedom to be side-tracked and follow a new line of questioning. When Celia made her comment: “I wonder why all the teachers in this school are just ladies” (Celia transcript, 1.58), it would have be interesting to follow-up her comment with pertinent questions. However, her comments were regarded as outside the questioning parameters for this study.

Validity

I did not give the participants the opportunity to read their transcripts because of their age. I did check in action as much as possible and offered the girls the opportunity to ask questions at anytime.

Implications

The overall pattern from the data stresses that further analysis into the role model relationship for young children is warranted. Although I used a purposeful sample, it was too small to give anything but a glimpse into the perceptions of one specific group of girls in one specific setting, but it does provide much provocation for further investigation.

Girls require strong female role models who can be seen successfully carrying out a wide range of activities and occupations. As teachers are influential role models for many aspects of children’s educational experiences, it is particularly important in

school that female teachers are seen teaching the traditional subjects of Mathematics and Science as well as the more expressive, nurturing subjects. Gunn and MacNaughton (2007, p.131) stressed “the strategic role teachers can play in expanding the possibilities for children’s gender performances and strengthening gender relations”. Teachers must take pains to expose children to a wider variety of role models. Historical models were not mentioned by any of the girls. Educators can play a significant role by introducing the children to a wide range of historical, real-life and fictitious role models who represent a rich variety of professions, races and gender. A variety of potential people worthy of ‘looking up to’ allows children to accept diversity in others and appreciate themselves.

Conclusions

Children are “competent, capable and effective reporters of their own experiences” (Dockett & Perry, 2007, p.60). Multiple sources of information may be useful to help avoid method bias but only participants can define role models because it is they who perceive and internalize such a relationship. I regarded the girls as valuable and trustworthy informants providing unique perspectives on ‘who they looked up to’ and was committed to actively listening to them. I acknowledged the importance of context in understanding their lived experiences and recognized their capacity to reflect on their social and cultural worlds.

Overall, the most frequently named role model in this study was a parent. Members of the extended family and ‘significant others’ were also highly valued. These strong bonds will hopefully give the girls a safe base and haven when negotiating the challenges and pressures of adolescence. Given the omnipresence of sensational

articles in the media, it is reassuring for parents who must wonder if they have any impact at all on their children. Also it appeared that most of the girls in my study were capable of discerning the shallowness of media propaganda. When they identified characters from television, they chose them because of their skills and not their physical attractiveness, their popularity or the amount of money their fame had brought them. They recognized few of the supposedly famous peer-generated icons, and considered even fewer of them as worthy of being ‘looked up to’. The singers and actresses were disregarded and the ones who were the most frequently chosen could be regarded as ‘acceptable’ across a broad range of current society. Parents should be reassured by this conservative finding. The mass media is hindered by a narrow view of stereotyped gender representations. Parents and educators should make an effort to expose children to a wider variety of potential role models than the popular culture does. Dr Zurbriggen, chair of the APA Task Force (2007) stated that we should replace all these sexualised images with ones showing girls in positive settings – ones that show the uniqueness and competence of girls. I believe my girls are more discerning about who they look up to than is generally acknowledged. Emma verbalized this so accurately “they’re all sort of fake, not real” (Emma transcript, l. 31) or “too glossily distant to be useful role models” (Walker, 2007, p.515). I hope my interpretation of the girls’ active involvement in this study is a valid representation of what mattered to them at one specific point in time and will lead to further investigations of how to maximize the benefits of role models for young girls.

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Appendix A

Interview and task protocol – Who do you look up to?

Field-mapping task

Source of photographs for the photograph-sorting task

Interview and task recording sheet

Information letter and consent form for school

Information letter and consent form for parents

Information letter and consent form for girls

Process for obtaining participants

Interview and Task Protocol - Who do you look up to?

Preamble: I am asking you to help me with my study about girls. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your opinion. I will not use your name when I write your answers down. I want to tape our conversation so that I can check that I have got what you say down correctly. Anytime that you feel uncomfortable, or don't want to answer a question we can stop. Are you happy to answer some questions for me?

Interview:

The questions are all about who you look up to.

6.
 - a. Is there anyone in your family that you look up to?
 - b. What is it about that person that you look up to?
 - c. (Further follow-up question) Do you think you could do/be/achieve what they do?

7.
 - a. Is there anyone you look up to in school?
 - b. What is it about that person that you look up to?
 - c. (Further follow-up question) Do you think it is possible that you could do/be/achieve that?

8.
 - a. Is there anyone from television/movies/videos/games/magazines that you look up to?
 - b. Do you watch/read them frequently? (Every day, weekly or monthly)
 - c. What is it about that person that you look up to?

d. (Further follow-up question) Do you think it is possible that you could do/be/achieve that?

9. a. What about a book character? Is there a favourite book character that you look up to?

b. What is it about that person that you look up to?

c. (Further follow-up question) Do you think it is possible that you could do/be/achieve that?

10. a. Is there anyone else that you feel you look up to in a different area that we have missed out?

b. What is it about that person that you look up to?

c. (Further follow-up question) Do you think that you could do/be/achieve the things they can do?

First Field-mapping task – people of personal relevance:

Now we are going to do something different. I am going to show you the field map and you are going to make your very own field map showing the people who you look up to.

I place the large scale field map on the table in front of the child then I say:

You are right at the centre of this map. Here you are, thinking about the people you look up to.

The first circle closest to you shows the people you “totally look up to”; the middle circle shows those people who you “look up to a lot”; the outside circle is for the people who you “look up to” but who you don’t think are as important as the others. You are going to put the people you told

me about in the circle you think is most appropriate for you. We are going to use this side for your special people (*Indicate right-hand side*). Do you understand what I want you to do?

1. I give child the red icon that represents the family member they have previously named in Question 1a.

This is the person in your family you look up to. This is(*Insert name given by the child*).

Place your person to show how important they are to you.

2. After the child has placed the icon, I will give them the blue icon that represents the school person they previously named in Question 2a.

This is the person that you look up to in school. This is....(*Insert name given by the child*). Place your person to show how important they are to you. Remember, the first circle closest to you shows the people you “totally look up to”; the middle circle shows those people who you “look up to a lot”; the outside circle is for the people who you “look up to” but who you don’t think are as important as the others.

3. After the child has placed the icon, I will give them the green icon that represents the person from the popular media they previously named in Question 3a.

This is the person that you look up to on television/in magazines/videos/movies that you look up to. This is(*Insert the name of the person given by the child*). Place your person to show how important they are to you.

4. After the child has placed the icon, I will give them the yellow icon that represents the book character they previously named in Question 4a.

This is the book character that you look up to. This is*(Insert the name of the book character given by the child)*. Place your person to show how important they are to you.

5. After the child has placed the icon, I will give them the orange icon that represents the additional person that they have previously named in Question 5a.

This is the extra person that you chose who you look up to. This is*(Insert the name given by the child)*. Place your person to show how important they are to you.

Thank you. That looks amazing. Now I would like to take a picture of your map. Is that alright with you? I will give you a copy of your own field map later. *With child's agreement, take a digital photograph. Add a letter in the bottom right-hand corner to enable identification of each child's completed map. I then put the map out of sight on the floor.*

Photograph-sorting task:

I then bring out the set of peer-generated cards and spread them on the table.

Now I am going to show you some photographs of people who you may or may not look up to.

1. Are there any people here that you recognize? Put the ones you recognize over here. *Remove the ones not recognized. Note the photographs indicated by the child.*

2. Are there any people that you look up to here? *Indicate photographs still on the table. Remove any photographs not chosen. Note the photographs indicated by the child.*

3. *Indicating each card and using the questions previously used in the interview section:*

- a. What is it about that person that you look up to?
- b. (Further follow-up question) Do you think you could do/be/achieve what they do?

4. Now we are going to look at your field map again. *Lift field map back onto the table.* Now can you show me how important these people are to you by placing them on the other side of your map. Remember, the first circle closest to you shows the people you “totally look up to”; the middle circle shows those people who you “look up to a lot”; the outside circle is for the people who you “look up to” but who you don’t think are as important as the others. Where will you put this one? *Repeat until all cards are positioned.*

5. Do you mind if I take another photograph to show where you have put these people you have chosen on your map? *Record field map digitally again.* I will give you a copy of this too.

I really appreciate the way you have helped me by giving me such interesting answers for my study. Are you happy for me to use your ideas? Please do not discuss our meeting with your friends else they may copy your ideas. I will not use your name when I write up my report.

Field Mapping Task – 10 minutes*Purpose:*

To order the relative importance of significant role models for each girl across a variety of domains.

Materials:

The base mat is a laminated circular white card, (diameter-60cms) with three concentric circles radiating from the centre (self), indicating the strength of the perceived significance. The inner circle shows an extremely important relationship – “totally look up to”; the second, very important – “look up to a lot” and the third, important but not as important as the others – “look up to”. The circles are horizontally split in half. The right-hand side will show the participant’s personal choice, the left-hand side will be used for placement of peer-generated photographs of role models (See attached sheet). The symbolic figures are different coloured laminated shapes (Family – red; School – blue; Popular media - green; Book characters - yellow; Any other dominated person orange). Adult females are symbolized by solid coloured figures (6cms in height) with a triangular base; adult males – solid coloured figures with a square base; peer-aged females – smaller shaded triangular figure (4cms in height); peer-aged males – smaller shaded square figure.

Process

See Interview and Task Protocol

Recording

Digital photographs will be taken at the end of the field mapping task and again when the peer-generated photographs are added. . A letter will be placed on the bottom right-hand corner to enable identification of each participant’s completed map.

References

Samuelsson, M., Thernlund, G., & Ringstron, J. (1996).

Using the five field map to describe the social network of children: A methodological study. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 19(2), 327-345.

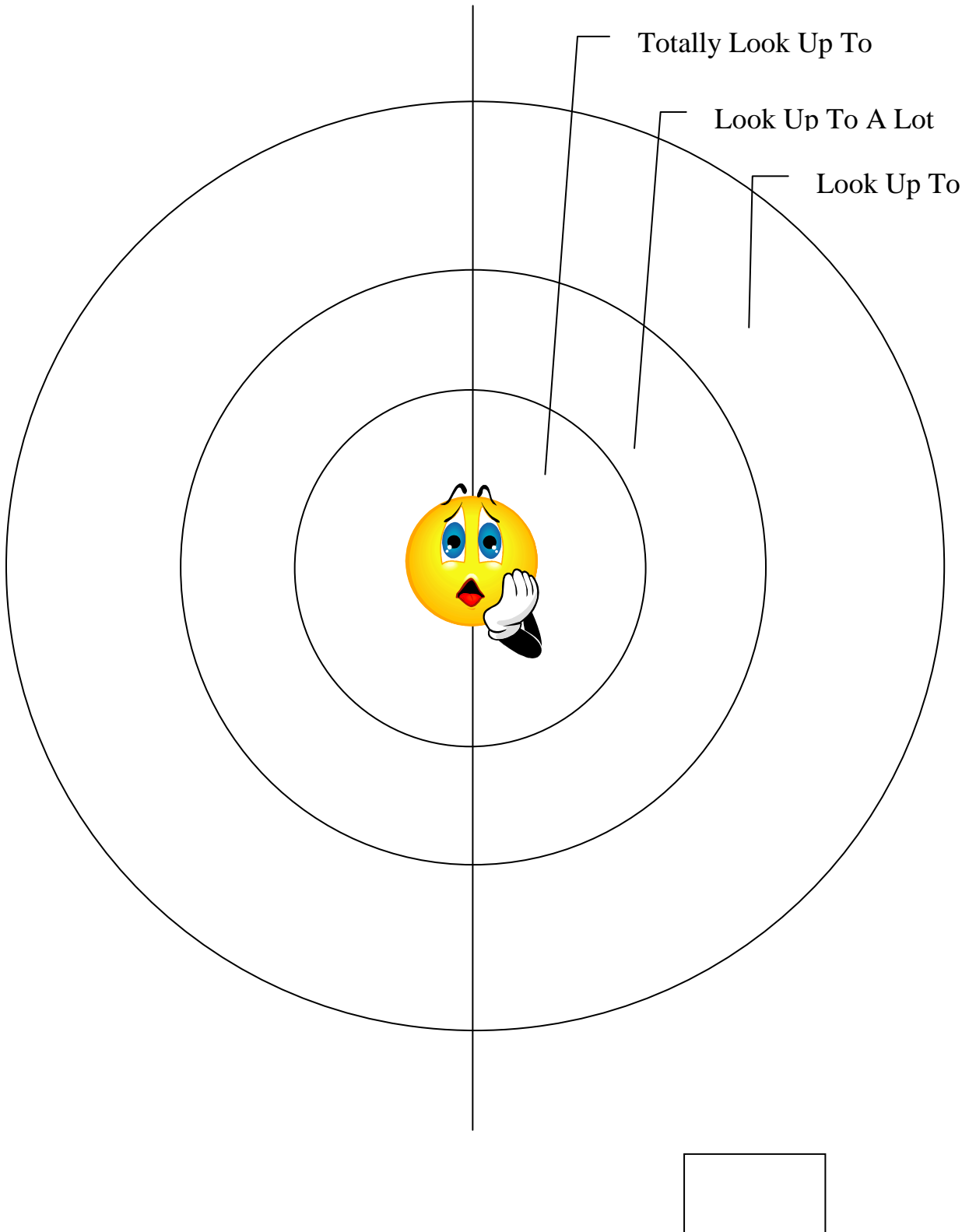
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Young children's perceptions of their relationships with family members: Links with family settings, friendships, and adjustment. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 25(6), 521-529.

My "Who I look up to" Map

B. Peer - Generated

A. Personal



Source of Photographs for the Photograph-sorting Task – 15 minutes

Purpose

To generate a discussion about the attributes and to show the relative importance of peer-generated role models to the participants by using visual stimuli.

Materials

The pictures will be prepared by a class of Year 8 girls as a special project at another school to avoid contamination of my participants. The preparation of the pictures will be organized by a teaching colleague at her school as part of her normal Social Studies programme and will be gifted to me for use in my study. Her girls will be given the task to research the role models/icons that they feel would be important to girls and short-list 12 photographs. The photographs will be mounted on playing cards (6.5 x 9cms), and laminated for presentation to the participants. They will be identified by a number.

Note:

- * Copies of the photographs will be submitted to the Human Ethics Committee for approval before I start my study.
- * The principal of the school will have the right to withdraw any pictures deemed unsuitable for presentation.

Process

See Interview and Task Protocol

Recording

The task will be audio-taped for verification of written notes on the prepared sheet.

The placement of the photographs on the field map will be digitally photographed.

References

Howard, J. (2002).

Eliciting young children's perceptions of play, work and learning using the activity apperception story procedure. *Early Child Development and Care*, 172, 489-502.

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Interview and Task Recording Notes

Identifying code letter:.....

Age:.....

Interview:

11. a. Is there anyone in your family that you look up to?

b. What is it about that person that you look up to?

c. (Further follow-up question) Do you think you could do/be/achieve what they do?

12. a. Is there anyone you look up to in school?

b. What is it about that person that you look up to?

c. (Further follow-up question) Do you think it is possible that you could do/be/achieve that?

13. a. Is there anyone from television/movies/videos/games/magazines that you look up to?

b. Do you watch/read them frequently? (Every day, weekly or monthly)

c. What is it about that person that you look up to?

d. (Further follow-up question) Do you think it is possible that you could do/be/achieve that?

14. a. What about a book character? Is there a favourite book character that you look up to?

b. What is it about that person that you look up to?

c. (Further follow-up question) Do you think it is possible that you could do/be/achieve that?

15. a. Is there anyone else that you feel you look up to in a different area that we have missed out?

b. What is it about that person that you look up to?

c. (Further follow-up question) Do you think that you could do/be/achieve the things they can do?

First Field-mapping task – people of personal relevance: Circle

1. Family Person: 1 2 3

2. School Person: 1 2 3

3. Popular Media person: 1 2 3

4. Book character: 1 2 3

5. Any other special person: 1 2 3

Comments:

Photograph-sorting task:

1. Recognized photographs – cross off unrecognized ones.

2. Circle any chosen as persons to look up to.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

3.

* Number of card:

a. What is it about that person that you look up to?

b. (Further follow-up question) Do you think you could do/be/achieve what they do?

* Number of card:

a. What is it about that person that you look up to?

b. (Further follow-up question) Do you think you could do/be/achieve what they do?

* Number of card:

a. What is it about that person that you look up to?

b. (Further follow-up question) Do you think you could do/be/achieve what they do?

* Number of card:

a. What is it about that person that you look up to?

b. (Further follow-up question) Do you think you could do/be/achieve what they do?

* Number of card:

a. What is it about that person that you look up to?

b. (Further follow-up question) Do you think you could do/be/achieve what they do?

* Number of card:

a. What is it about that person that you look up to?

b. (Further follow-up question) Do you think you could do/be/achieve what they do?

* Number of card:

a. What is it about that person that you look up to?

b. (Further follow-up question) Do you think you could do/be/achieve what they do?

4. Replacement of peer-generated photographs chosen:

1.	1	2	3
2.	1	2	3
3.	1	2	3
4.	1	2	3
5.	1	2	3
6.	1	2	3
7.	1	2	3

8.	1	2	3
9.	1	2	3
10.	1	2	3
11.	1	2	3
12.	1	2	3

Comments:

Research Dissertation: An exploratory study of who young girls look up to

Course: EDUC 695 – Research Dissertation
School of Education Studies and Human Development
University of Canterbury

5 July

Dear Principal

I am writing to request approval to conduct a research dissertation in school. It will involve 12 girls spanning the age range from 5-12 years. I am seeking volunteers to aid my understanding of a research topic on the part role models may play as girls develop. I am undertaking this study as part of my Master of Education degree at the University of Canterbury and it has received approval by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury. I have attached a copy of my Human Ethics submission and approval letter.

The participants will be 12 girls, three from each age-band: 5-6 years; 7-8 years; 9-10 years and 11-12 years. From returned forms giving informed voluntary consent, the girls will be chosen on a random basis. I have enclosed a copy of the methodology for this process.

The sessions with each girl will take place in my office or in a designated room in the Girls' School where the participants feel comfortable and can not be overheard by others.

The study will involve three activities taking a total of approximately 30-40 minutes per child. It will involve an individual 15 minute taped interview, a field-mapping task – 10 minutes and a photograph-sorting activity – 15 minutes. I have attached a description of each task.

I will conduct the activities over a period of two days, during the second week of the term. A timetable will agreed between teachers and myself and girls will be randomly allocated a time.

The sessions will be audio-taped to give verification of note-taking. None of the participants will hear the comments of others. Any child may decline to answer any questions or withdraw at anytime. Digital photographs will be taken of the field mapping task but will not include any photographs of the girls. No identifying names or details will be used in the completed research paper. The tapes of the interviews will be securely stored and destroyed after a five year period.

If you would like to receive a brief summary of the report at the end of the project, I would be delighted to give you one. I will be happy to present a report to the Board or at a staff meeting session after the study is completed in March 2008.

I would like to hear back from you in writing by the end of the holidays. Please do not hesitate to contact either, myself or my lecturers, Dr Kathleen Liberty, and Alex Gunn for further information.

With many thanks

Carole Wright

Ph:

e-mail:

Dr Kathleen Liberty

Ph:

e-mail: kathleen.liberty@canterbury.ac.nz

Alex Gunn

Ph:

e-mail: alex.gunn@canterbury.ac.nz

School of Education Studies and Human Development**University of Canterbury****EDUC 695: Research Dissertation – An exploratory study of who young girls look up to****School Consent Form**

- I have read the attached information sheet and understand what is involved in the research project.
- I give consent for my school to take part in the project.
- I agree to information gained in school being used as part of the study.
- I understand that all information obtained during the course of the project will be kept completely confidential.
- I understand that the written report will not identify any child, her family or the school in any way.
- All taped interviews will be securely stored and destroyed after a period of five years.

Name(Please print):

Signature:

Date:

Research Dissertation: An exploratory study of who young girls look up to

Course: EDUC 695 – Research Dissertation
School of Education Studies and Human Development
University of Canterbury

12 July

Dear Parents

I am seeking volunteers to aid my understanding of a research study on the part role models may play as girls develop. I am undertaking this study as part of my Master of Education degree at the University of Canterbury and it has received approval by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury.

The participants will be 12 girls, three from each age-band: 5-6 years; 7-8 years; 9-10 years and 11-12 years. From returned forms giving informed voluntary consent, the girls will be chosen on a random basis by drawing the returned envelopes out of a box. Your child may not necessarily be interviewed.

The sessions with each girl will take place in my office or in a designated room in the Girls' School where the participants feel comfortable and can not be overheard by others.

The study will involve three activities taking a total of approximately 30-40 minutes per child. It will involve an individual 15 minute taped interview, a field-mapping task – 10 minutes and a photograph-sorting activity – 15 minutes. The school will be given the opportunity to withdraw any photographs it deems unsuitable.

I will conduct the activities over a period of two days, during the second week of term. A timetable will be agreed between teachers and myself and the girls will randomly allocated a time. Care will be taken with the time arrangements to make sure that missing 40 minutes of school will not adversely affect your daughter's education.

The sessions will be audio-taped to give verification of note-taking. None of the participants will hear the comments of others. Any child may decline to answer any questions or withdraw at anytime. Digital photographs will be taken of the field mapping task but will not include any photographs of the girls. No identifying names or details will be used in the completed research paper. The tapes of the interviews will be securely stored and destroyed after a five year period.

If you would like to receive a brief summary of the report at the end of the project, I would be delighted to give you one after it is published in March 2008. Please do not hesitate to contact either, myself or my lecturers, Dr Kathleen Liberty, and Alex Gunn for further information.

If you are happy for your daughter to participate, I would be grateful if you and your daughter could sign the appropriate consent form and return them in the enclosed envelope to the boxes in the front hallway by this Friday. I would appreciate it if you would refrain from discussing the

topic at home before the interview date so that I get your daughter's independent ideas. If you do not wish your daughter to take part, please do not make any return.

With many thanks

Carole Wright

Ph:

e-mail:

Dr Kathleen Liberty

Ph:

e-mail: kathleen.liberty@canterbury.ac.nz

Alex Gunn

Ph:

e-mail: alex.gunn@canterbury.ac.nz

**School of Education and Human Development
University of Canterbury**

EDUC 695: Research Dissertation – An exploratory study of who young girls look up to

Parent Consent Form

- I have read the attached information sheet and understand what is involved in the research project.
- I give consent for my daughter to take part in the project.
- I agree to information gained in school being used as part of the study.
- I understand that all information obtained during the course of the project will be kept completely confidential.
- I understand that the written report will not identify any child, his or her family or the school in any way.
- All taped interviews will be securely stored and destroyed after a period of five years.

Name(Please print):

Signature:

Date:

I would like to receive a brief summary of the research study *Yes/No*

Research Project: An exploratory study of who young girls look up to

Course: EDUC 695 – Research Dissertation
School of Education and Human Development
University of Canterbury

12 July

Please could you read this letter to your daughter if she is unable to read it.

Dear Pupil

I would be pleased if you would volunteer to help me with my research project for university. I want to know your ideas about who you look up to. There are no right or wrong answers. It is your thoughts that are important to me. The information that you give me will be used in my study but your name will be kept confidential so no one will know that your words are being used. You do not have to help me and you are free to say you would like to stop if you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions. I would like to tape your answers so that I make sure that I have got what you say down correctly. You can see what I am writing and can ask me to change it at any time. I ask you not to discuss what you have said to me with your friends until all the interviews are over, otherwise other people may use your ideas. When I have finished copying down from the tape, I will keep the tape safe so that no one else will be able to hear it. I will be taking digital photographs of some of your work and I will give you a copy. If you would like to know what I discover from my study, I will send you a brief summary when it is finished next year.

If you are happy to volunteer to help me, please sign the consent sheet. As I only need a small group for my study, you may not necessarily be interviewed, but I am interesting in your ideas.

Thanking you,

Mrs Wright

**School of Education Studies and Human Development
University of Canterbury**

EDUC 695:

Research Dissertation: An exploratory study of who young girls look up to

Consent Form

- **I AM HAPPY TO TALK TO MRS WRIGHT AND HELP HER WITH THE STUDY.**
- **I DO NOT HAVE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THAT I FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH.**
- **I KNOW I CAN STOP IF I DO NOT FEEL HAPPY ABOUT TALKING.**
- **I KNOW MRS WRIGHT WILL KEEP MY NAME CONFIDENTIAL. I KNOW MRS WRIGHT WILL KEEP THE TAPES SAFE SO THAT NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO HEAR THEM.**

NAME:

SIGNED:

DATE:

Process for obtaining participants

I will send the information letter and both parent and child consent forms home via the normal school newsletter distribution system.

The consent forms and their return envelopes will be colour coded so they can be easily sorted on return:

5-6 year olds – pink

7-8 year olds – blue

9-10 year olds – yellow

11-12 year olds – white

I will sort the appropriate numbers of each colour for each class and give them to the class teachers for distribution.

The envelopes containing the consent forms will be returned to four boxes in the front hallway. The principal will be asked to draw out three consent forms from each box. A reserve will be pulled out from each box to be used if a child is absent on the interview days.

A timetable will be drawn up to suit the participants, the teachers and myself and a code letter will be given to each participant so that confidentiality is ensured on notes and data.

Appendix B

Press Articles

“The Rise of Raunch” (*Sunday Star Times*, February 25, 2007, p. C4).

“This advert isn’t sexist – Yeah right” (*Sunday Star Times*, February 25, 2007, p.C1).

“The tale of a generation of ‘damaged’ girls” (*The Weekly Telegraph*, Wednesday February 28-Tuesday March 6, 2007, p.24).

“Move over, Barbie: there’s a new doll in town” (*The Week*, 13 January, 2007, p.13).

“Tweenies being pushed to show cleavage” (*The Press*, May 23, 2007, p.1).

SUNDAY STAR TIMES / FEBRUARY 28, 2007 SECTION C

FOCUS

J-WALKING

Life on America's Next Top Model. C17

ARTS
TELEVISION
BOOKS
MUSIC
PUZZLES



This advert isn't sexist

Yeah right.

Sex

cells

In a flashback to the 1970s, breasts and bikinis are again being used to sell everything from cars to hamburgers. Is feminism truly dead, or this time are the women on the billboards in on the joke too?

Ruth Laugesen reports.

THE INVITATION is for a top-drawer corporate social occasion - drinks while cruising on Auckland harbour. The main boards the boat and is greeted by several pretty young women in tight, skimpy outfits, handing out T-shirts.

"Oh," says one, pressing close to him and stroking his arm firmly. "You should be an XL, wouldn't you?" before breaking into giggles.

"XL sounds too big, be precise. Oh no, you would be at least a large," says the girl, widening her eyes and "opening her upper arm."

These are prom girls, the must-have marketing accessory seen at an increasing range of sporting events, alcohol promotions, and now as part of corporate hospitality.

"They sell trinkets of shot glasses in bar promotions, are paid to enter pub bikini contests, play hostesses for late firms to corporate houses and pose for pictures with happy male staff at Christmas functions."

"It used to be all around liquor, then cars, but now it's creeping out into everyday brands. It's more and more acceptable to use pretty girls to sell products," says Parulata Esher of VMA Model and Talent. This week, two of her models, replete in tana, bikini tops and bangles, were stationed at Auckland University with a mechanical bull as part of promotions for Burger King.

Promote girls are the bikini-clad waitresses for a new class of sexual exploitation in advertising. In a bizarre cultural U-turn, we seem to be back in the 1970s, when bikinis were men and women were there to smile and look available.

In Hamilton this month, a billboard above the Braden shop featured the usual visual feast of a reclining woman in lacy and quilts. But more than usual was on offer. She was pulling at one corner of her bikini, with a catch-line reading, "feel free to poke around down there."

Motorola's current campaign features a barebreasted woman in a provocative backdrop to a cellphone. And to a Burger King television commercial young women in bikini houses along on her back on a beach.

prompting media commentator John Deane to dub it "the most blatant example of using sex to sell burgers in the 21st century".

At times, what is presumably supposed to be post-coital trysts gets downright stomach-churning. Local fashion house World has been selling pink baby "diapers", presumably intended for baby girls, emblazoned with the logo "Future Porn Star".

Young women, far from stalling rising up to form feminist action groups to throw Burger King and the bikini girls off campus, appear to be themselves enthusiastic players in the superexploitation of New Zealand. In fact, managers have found that if they provide poles they don't even have to hire pole dancers, because female patrons will do it for free.

And yet, the same generation of young women who are happy to wear Playboy T-shirts are beating the boys when we are on to our second female prime minister and women are leading the Most Pure and the Green. Dr. what's going on? Are we failing to recognise a new wave of damaging and oppressive sexual stereotyping? Or are these images harmless post-feminist nonsense, at a time when nothing can hold women back?

To find out, the Sunday Star-Times went to what should be the beating heart of right-on feminism - a women's rights officer at a university. And we found dismay.

"I myself as a woman and as a feminist, am confused by these things," said Norvala Moore, women's rights officer at the University of Waikato.

Sex and power in the age of pornography - why parents should be worried.

C4-5

To page C4

THE RISE OF RAUNCH CULTURE



GET A GILLETTE FUSION POWER RAZOR

WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE TO SUNDAY STAR-TIMES

Subscribers to the Sunday Star-Times can now enjoy a FREE Gillette Fusion Power Razor when they subscribe to the paper for 12 months. The offer is available to new subscribers only. The Gillette Fusion Power Razor is a breakthrough in shaving technology, resulting in a closer, smoother shave. The razor features a precision-bladed foil that flexes to follow the contours of your face, and a built-in trimmer to reach those hard-to-reach areas. The razor is also equipped with a safety lock to prevent accidental activation. The Gillette Fusion Power Razor is available in two colors: silver and black. The silver razor is priced at \$29.95, and the black razor is priced at \$34.95. The offer is available while supplies last. To take advantage of this offer, please call 1-800-877-8777 or visit our website at www.gillette.com.

Two ways to subscribe by EasyPay:

1. PHONE: Call toll free 1-800-877-8777, ext. 229 or 1-800-877-8777, ext. 229.

2. TEXT: Text SST-SUB to 3993 and we will call you back. This offer is available while supplies last.

YOUR NEWSPAPER OF THE WEEK




24 CHILDHOOD & FAMILY LIFE

Wed Feb 28 - Tue Mar 6 2007 The Week

The tale of a generation of 'damaged' girls

Sexualised images are pressurising children into growing up too quickly. Sarah Womack reports

A GENERATION of very young girls is being psychologically damaged by inappropriate "sexy" clothing, toys and images in the media that are corrupting childhood, leading psychologists have warned.

They say marketing takes unfair advantage of children's desire for affection and the need to conform, leading to eating disorders, low self-esteem and depression.

Their report echoes a warning by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, and follows a United Nations study saying that British children were the unhappiest and unhealthiest in the developed world.

The American Psychological Association's report says inappropriate marketing is leading to the sexualisation of children by a consumer society. Apart from clothing for five- and six-year-olds, with old-fashioned frilly frocks replaced by mini skirts, plunging necklines and sequined crop tops, the report specifically criticises "Bratz dolls".

These outsell Barbie dolls in Britain by two to one and come dressed in miniskirts, fishnet stockings and leather boots.

Disney's Little Mermaid or Pocahontas "which have more cleavage, fewer clothes and are depicted as sexier than characters of yesteryear" are also picked out.

"The consequences of the sexualisation of girls in media today are very real and are likely to be a negative influence on girls' healthy development," said Eileen Zurbruggen, the APA's task force chairman. "As a society, we need to replace all these sexualised images with ones showing girls in positive settings. The goal should be to deliver messages to all adolescents - boys and girls - that lead to healthy sexual development."

Her comments were endorsed by Dr Jean Kilbourne, the co-author of a forthcoming book *So Sexy, So Soon: The Sexualisation Of Childhood*, who said clothing, toys and adverts were shaping a child's gender identity and values in the wrong way.

She saw a direct link between what was happening and the rise in under-age sex.

Dr Kilbourne told *The Daily Telegraph*: "You see these clothes everywhere, tight T-shirts for little girls saying 'so many boys, so little time', that sort of thing."

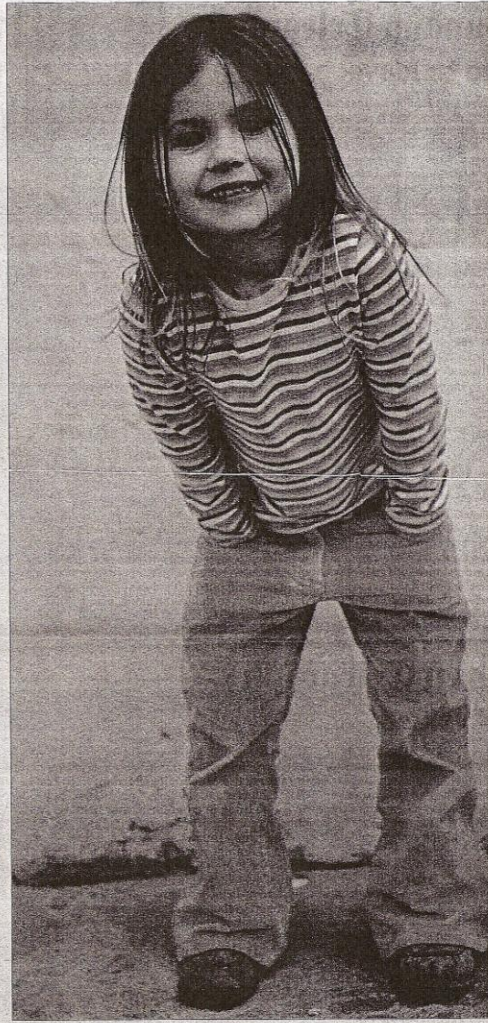
"Parents think it is clever

but they cease to think that when their child becomes sexually active at 12. There is huge pressure on girls to look sexy and dress provocatively at a younger age and boys are getting graphic sexualised messages. But parents can refuse to buy this stuff."

Recently Asda was condemned for marketing black lacy underwear to nine-year-old girls.

Sue Palmer, the education consultant and author of *Toxic Childhood*, said: "The same mothers that dress their daughters up like tarts are probably the mothers going on demos against paedophiles. They don't make the connection between how they are dressing children and what they are so frightened of - paedophilia." A Bratz spokesman said its dolls were bought by over-eights. "The Bratz brand, which has remained number one in the UK market for 23 consecutive months focuses core values on friendship, hair play and a 'passion for fashion'."

The spokesman quoted Dr Bryan Young, a psychologist at Exeter University, as saying "parents may feel awkward but I don't think children see the dolls as sexy. They just think they're pretty".



Four-year-old Amelie's mother refuses to give in to 'pester power'

Sharp rise in pregnancy rates for under 16s

BY SARAH WOMACK
SOCIAL AFFAIRS
CORRESPONDENT

HUNDREDS more girls aged 15 or younger are getting pregnant despite a multi-million pound Government campaign.

Official statistics show that 7,464 girls under the age of

Beverley Hughes, the Children's Minister, said local authorities had to "raise their game" in tackling the issue.

However, she said: "The strategy is pushing teenage pregnancy rates in the right direction."

"Rates for under-18s are at their lowest level for 20 years and we are successfully

1998 figure by 2010.

Ministers need a 10 per cent fall in the under-18 pregnancy rate each year for the next five years if the target is to be reached.

They said that seizing on teenage pregnancy rates - as opposed to actual numbers - was misleading and could be attributed to an increasing

or abortion".

Researchers from Nottingham University Business School published a report concluding that providing the pill to teenagers free of charge at pharmacies had no impact on teenage pregnancy rates in England.

Prof David Paton, of

rates of sexually transmitted infections amongst young people have continued to increase.

"On the basis of current trends, there appears to be little or no likelihood that the Government will come anywhere close to meeting its teenage pregnancy targets."

The Family Education



Best of the American columnists NEWS 13

Move over, Barbie: there's a new doll in town

At the grand old age of 47, Barbie is in danger of losing her crown, said Margaret Talbot in *The New Yorker*. Her rivals are called Bratz dolls, and they're designed for little girls who've grown up in the post-Britney era. Made with twig-thin bodies, oversize heads, lots of eyeliner, and plump, candy-red lips, they look like pole dancers and smile with "the sly, dozy expression of a party girl after one too many mojitos". You won't see Bratz dolls wearing Barbie's long dresses or career-gal outfits; their racy togs include tank tops, stilettos, and

micro-mini skirts. Barbie, researchers claim, now reminds girls of their mothers, and has become uncool. Bratz, on the other hand, has a much fresher image; 125 million of these vamps have been sold worldwide. Barbie still claims 60% of the market, but Bratz has reached 40% and is climbing fast.



Call me old-fashioned, said Kirsten Powers in the *New York Post*, but "when did the doll section turn into a porn shop?" Barbie, bless her plastic soul, may have had a ludicrous figure, but she didn't come with "bustiers and garters" or some heavy-handed message about what girls should aspire to be. Depending on the girl, Barbie could be a



Will Barbie (above) lose out to the Bratz (left and right)?

housewife, a doctor or a businesswoman. Bratz, by contrast, offers only "a hypersexualised party lifestyle", and reinforces the new feminine ideal as embodied by Paris Hilton – shopping by day and behaving badly all night.

The shift towards Bratz, said Reyhan Harmanci in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, is a symptom of what toy industry marketers call "KGOY", or "Kids Growing Older Younger". But this row is not new. When Barbie was created in 1959 – inspired by a German cartoon prostitute that had been made into a lewd three-dimensional novelty item for men – she met with a similar reaction. Children loved Barbie, but parents hated the busty toy. Manufacturers have tried to introduce more wholesome dolls, said Talbot, but with little success. The Happy To Be Me doll, which had a thicker waist, wider hips and larger feet than Barbie, came out in the early Nineties, but never took off. In the words of M.G. Lord, author of *Forever Barbie*: "She may have been happy to be herself, but it was obvious, even to kids, that she had extremely low standards." By contrast, Bratz dolls have "brattitude" – and whatever parents may say, that clearly appeals to little girls.



The sickness within our health system

Paul Krugman

The New York Times

America's health care system is a disgrace, says Paul Krugman. Consider some basic facts: the US spends more on health care per person than any other country – "almost twice as much as the French, whose medical care is among the best in the world" – yet it has the highest infant mortality and almost the lowest life expectancy in the developed world. Every year, lack of medical insurance plunges millions of us into severe financial distress and sends thousands of others to an early grave. How does a wealthy country like the US get it so wrong? The answer lies in the inefficient composition of our health service. Whereas other advanced nations have straightforward government insurance systems, we have a mass of private insurance companies that collectively have far higher administration costs and overheads. The "fragmentation" of our system leads to more medical errors than in countries with unified systems like Canada and Britain, and generates a lot of extra paperwork. What's more, US insurers "often refuse to pay for preventative care, even though such care saves a lot of money in the long run". Some say the US can't afford a universal health care system, but the truth is we can't afford to carry on without one.

We must look after our friends in Iraq

David Ignatius

The Washington Post

Whatever the US does in Iraq in the coming months, says David Ignatius, it must remember its moral obligation to the Iraqis who have risked their lives to be America's allies. Our precipitate withdrawal from Vietnam provides some useful lessons. In our haste to pull out of Saigon in 1975, we abandoned thousands of Vietnamese agents and collaborators to their fate, having failed to destroy incriminating personal files and intelligence dossiers. However, we partially made up for this betrayal in subsequent years, by accepting thousands of the refugees, or "boat people", who fled the brutal policies of the North Vietnamese; and their children and grandchildren "are among our nation's great success stories". But today we have failed to extend the same help to Iraqis. Some 1.8 million of them are living outside Iraq, with tens of thousands more fleeing each month. Yet the number of Iraqis the Bush administration had planned to resettle in the US in 2007 amounted to just 500. The Vietnamese who came to the US after 1975 have helped, through investment and other links, to bring political change to their home country, which now enjoys friendly relations with the US. "When Iraq comes back together some day, will educated Iraqis be America's friends, or will they despise us?"

Most people wanted Saddam dead

Jeff Jacoby

The Boston Globe

Were you appalled by the execution of Saddam Hussein, asks Jeff Jacoby, or "are you one of those squares who thinks the death of a mass murderer makes the world a better place"? Judging by the official reaction, most Europeans fall in the first category. "Barbaric," said Dutch and Belgian officials. "Tragic," echoed the Vatican. "Mainstream middle-class sentiment in Europe," sniffed a British columnist, "now regards the death penalty as being as ethically tainted as the crimes that produced that sentence." Really? The quick and painless death meted out to Saddam is morally equivalent to the sadistic brutalities that earned him the nickname of Butcher of Baghdad? If Europeans believe that, they are fools. But they don't. The truth is that most Europeans, outside "the leftist elites who run the media and staff the foreign ministries", believe the opposite. A poll conducted last month for *Le Monde* found that, while most Americans (80%) favoured hanging Saddam, so did most Spaniards (51%), most Germans (53%), most French people (58%) and most Britons (69%). Ordinary people everywhere see Saddam's hanging as "an act of moral hygiene. If their politicians and journalists see something different – well, what else is new?"

THE PRESS

www.press.co.nz WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 2007 Subscription from 95c Retail \$1.10

TREASURE TROVE
RETURN OF THE
PIRATES F1

WIN A TRIP
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HONG KONG A13

Call to return crims to NI

Mika Simons

Canterbury's top policewoman is sick of 'verbally bad' North Island criminals being sent south and handing police officers to our crime.

Superintendent Sandra Manderson says local prisons are being filled with North Island criminals who may have no real reason for being there, costing money to run.

Yesterday, Manderson called for the criminals to be kept in their home towns during sentences, or at least returned on release.

Her plea comes as the Corrections Department battles with its biggest prison master of over \$800 million.

Manderson said she had met the department and said officials bluntly what she thought of criminals being sent south.

"There are some seriously bad criminals coming out into Canterbury from the Canterbury prisons and they have come from the North Island. It really aggravates me," she said.

"I need to make a difference. I'm in the job to try to reduce crime, but we just seem to be battling uphill with more and more being released. We are trying to make some changes, but it's just not enough."

Manderson said police monitored offenders back in the community, but it was difficult to move the prisoners once they were out of jail. A single solution would be acting before their release.

A Corrections spokesman said last night that the department encouraged prisoners to seek accommodation in an area where they had supportive family or friends and friends. Prisoners generally returned to their home region on release.

Master prisons mean that prisoners from the South Island were in fact being transported to the North Island rather than the other way around, she said.

This pressure would be alleviated with the opening of a 300-bed Otago Correctional Facility next month.

Canterbury Mayor Gary Mavor backed Manderson. He felt that offenders should be sent back to their home towns.

"They are only in our community because they were in prison here. When you have somebody like that and they

come to your community I personally think they should go home."

He would like to see a message sent to the justice sector that Canterbury would not accept criminals from other regions.

Salisbury Street Foundation chairman Ron Evans said some of its clients were from out of Canterbury.

The foundation, based in St Albans, offers rehabilitation programmes for young offenders.

"They (former inmates) don't get selected on regional grounds, they get selected on how much offending they have done."

"There are quite a few people on our programmes that don't come from Canterbury or Christchurch. Even so."

Some of the prisoners did offend while on the programme. "At least half of them don't complete it. If there is any offending we will send them straight back (to prison)."

"If they graduated from the programme the chance they will offend are not high," he said.

Howard League for Penal Reform spokeswoman Kathy Downall said many of the prisoners at Canterbury prisons would be from outside the region, but she felt most of them returned home on release.

"I would think that the bulk of them go back. When they are doing a long-term sentence the families may move down to the community, but I don't think that would have much of an effect."

Prisoner Aid and Rehabilitation Society Christchurch manager Colin Elliot felt the persistent problem of released prisoners offending in Christchurch was "not really an issue."

"On the whole the people we work with stay in Christchurch for positive reasons," he said.

Canterbury University masters student Lorie Clark is investigating the phenomenon of "boomerang" and will soon publish a report on the impact of popular culture on girls aged eight to 12, which highlights the increasing sexualisation of girls.

Clark said among her almost 200 research subjects were many young girls who wanted a padded bra and didn't really understand celebrities such as Paris

TOUGH CAR MEASURES



Just arriving: Stacy Le Breton, 16, with her pride and joy - daughter Anastasia and the car.

Photo: Stacy Le Breton

Bid to put brakes on boy racers

Don Eddies

National affairs editor

The Government is considering tough new measures to tackle boy racers, including sending overseas cars to the scrap heap.

"It was about driving up plans for compulsory third-party insurance yesterday in a bid to put young super off-road in high-performance vehicles off the road. Political consensus appeared to be growing around the need for stronger measures after a meeting of ministers in Christchurch demanded action to stem a tide of overseas drifts

from a pattern of youth bores and fast cars. National said sending overseas cars would send a firm message: putting speed-up vehicles off the road and out of a driving school market ready-made for young boys."

Transport Safety Minister Gerry Daguerre said the Government was not ruling out the idea.

"I think the idea is worth considering," he said, but stressed the current practice of impounding cars was preferable and working plans more than 2000 had been taken off the

roads in the last year. He said sending cars might prove effective.

The Land Transport (Unsubscribed Street and Drug Road) Amendment Act passed in April 2005 already gives police the ability to impound

vehicles for 28 days for a first offence. A judge can subsequently order permanent confiscation. Mayors called for the Government to conduct an urgent review of liquor advertising and laws, an alcohol ban in public places, tobacco a day and

a compulsory review of licensing, purchase and financing terms for high-performance cars for drivers under 20.

So-called "Christchurch boy racers" hit back at their critics yesterday, saying police targeted "them."

Stacy Le Breton and Ben Goddard said they took their 16-year-old daughter to city cruises around the city. "We're not bad people, all we want is somewhere safe," said Le Breton.

We're not bad people, all we want is somewhere safe.

Stacy Le Breton on interview

Tweenies being pushed to show cleavage

Don Thomas

Pre-pubescent girls as young as eight are pushing their mothers to buy them padded bras, according to a Canterbury University researcher.

Canterbury University masters student Lorie Clark is investigating the phenomenon of "boomerang" and will soon publish a report on the impact of popular culture on girls aged eight to 12, which highlights the increasing sexualisation of girls.

Clark said among her almost 200 research subjects were many young girls who wanted a padded bra and didn't really understand celebrities such as Paris

Hilton and Britney Spears. They also read magazines featuring articles on sexually transmitted diseases and how to get a man into bed, Clark said.

"My concern is that children are being encouraged to grow up faster than they used to or should be."

"Everything is pushing kids in that direction - television shows, advertising, pop, rock, music videos and magazines. They take from these things their guidelines on how to be how to act and they see that being beautiful and sexualised is good."

While Clark's research may be alienating to many, it identified that parents, particularly mothers, can have a lot of positive influence. Clark said for girls aged eight to 11, parents had a greater influence than friends or the media. She said parents should monitor the kind of media influences their children were exposed to and try to talk to them about what they thought was "good."

For example, parents could explain that Britney Spears was doing publicity stunts because she had a new perfume coming out rather than being sexually interested or wealthy, Clark said.

Clark will be discussing her research at the Canterbury Women's Club tomorrow.

Several stores selling leotards confirmed they regularly

had groups of girls aged between eight and 10 visiting and trying on cleavage-boasting bras.



These are Lorie Clark says children are being pushed to grow up too fast.

"It's a bit sad to see a girl just starting off or not even moving a leg trying on something to try to look like she has big breasts, to look more like a woman," said one store assistant, who did not want to be named.

A child therapist and the chief executive of the Institute for Child Protection Studies, Andrea Simons, said there was little research on the impact of modern society on girls before they reached their teens and how they were affected by a changing society.

Simons said Clark's research was positive because it concluded that parents could have a positive impact on their young girls.



MEN NEED SUPPORT

MP Judy Turner says government is sexist against men.

>> NEWS A2



CASINO SHARES

Barry Thomas coy on buying more shares in casino.

>> BUSINESS C1



SUDDEN DEPARTURE

NZ cycle coach Terry Gyle leaves in a rush.

>> SPORT F8

WEATHER A22

CHRISTCHURCH SHOWERS 17

ASHBURTON SHOWERS 15

THURMOUTH SHOWERS 15

BLINCHAM SHOWERS 20

GREYMOUTH THUNDER 16

NELSON RAIN 17

QUEENSTOWN SHOWERS 16

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Births & deaths F7

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